Nahjul Balagha

Peak of Eloquence

SERMONS, LETTERS AND SAYINGS

of

Amír al-mu’minín

HAZARAT ALI (A.S.)

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SERMONS

SERMON 1

In this sermon he recalls the creation of Earth and Sky and the birth of Adam.

Praise is due to Alláh whose worth cannot be described by speakers, whose bounties cannot be counted by calculators and whose claim (to obedience) cannot be satisfied by those who attempt to do so, whom the height of intellectual courage cannot appreciate, and the divings of understanding cannot reach; He for whose description no limit has been laid down, no eulogy exists, no time is ordained and no duration is fixed. He brought forth creation through His Omnipotence, dispersed winds through His Compassion, and made firm the shaking earth with rocks.

The foremost in religion is the acknowledgement of Him, the perfection of acknowledging Him is to testify Him, the perfection of testifying Him is to believe in His Oneness, the perfection of believing in His Oneness is to regard Him Pure, and the perfection of His purity is to deny Him attributes, because every attribute is a proof that it is different from that to which it is attributed and everything to which something is attributed is different from the attribute. Thus whoever attaches attributes to Alláh recognises His like, and who recognises His like regards Him two; and who regards Him two recognises parts for Him; and who recognises parts for Him mistook Him; and who mistook Him pointed at Him; and who pointed at Him admitted limitations for Him; and who admitted limitations for Him numbered Him.

Whoever said in what is He, held that He is contained; and whoever said on what is He held He is not on something else. He is a Being but not through phenomenon of coming into being. He exists but not from non-existence. He is with everything but not in physical nearness. He is different from everything but not in physical separation. He acts but without connotation of movements and instruments. He sees even when there is none to be looked at from among His creation. He is only One, such that there is none with whom He may keep company or whom He may miss in his absence.

The Creation of the Universe

He initiated creation most initially and commenced it originally, without undergoing reflection, without making use of any experiment, without innovating any movement, and without experiencing any aspiration of mind. He allotted all things their times, put together their variations gave them their properties, and determined their features knowing them before creating them, realising fully their limits and confines and appreciating their propensities and intricacies.

When Almighty created the openings of atmosphere, expanse of firmament and strata of winds, He flowed into it water whose waves were stormy and whose surges leapt one over the other. He loaded it on dashing wind and breaking typhoons, ordered them to shed it back (as rain), gave the wind control over the vigour of the rain, and acquainted it with its limitations. The wind blew under it while water flowed furiously over it.

Then Almighty created forth wind and made its movement sterile, perpetuated its position, intensified its motion and spread it far and wide. Then He ordered the wind to raise up deep waters and to intensify the waves of the oceans. So the wind churned it like the churning of curd and pushed it fiercely into the firmament throwing its front position on the rear and the stationary on the flowing till its level was raised and the surface was full of foam. Then Almighty raised the foam on to the open wind and vast firmament and made therefrom the seven skies and made the lower one as a stationary surge and the upper one as protective ceiling and a high edifice without any pole to support it or nail to hold it together. Then He decorated them with stars and the light of meteors and hung in it the shining sun and effulgent moon under the revolving sky, moving ceiling and rotating firmament.

The Creation of the Angels

Then He created the openings between high skies and filled them with all classes of His angels. Some of them are in prostration and do not kneel up. Others in kneeling position and do not stand up. Some of them are in array and do not leave their position. Others are extolling Alláh and do not get tired. The sleep of the eye or the slip of wit, or languor of the body or the effect of forgetfulness does not effect them.

Among them are those who work as trusted bearers of His message, those who serve as speaking tongues for His prophets and those who carry to and fro His orders and injunctions. Among them are the protectors of His creatures and guards of the doors of the gardens of Paradise. Among them are those also whose steps are fixed on earth but their necks are protruding into the skies, their limbs are getting out on all sides, their shoulders are in accord with the columns of the Divine Throne, their eyes are downcast before it, they have spread down their wings under it and they have rendered between themselves and all else curtains of honour and screens of power. They do not think of their Creator through image, do not impute to Him attributes of the created, do not confine Him within abodes and do not point at Him through illustrations.

Description of the Creation of Adam

Alláh collected from hard, soft, sweet and sour earth, clay which He dripped in water till it got pure, and kneaded it with moisture till it became gluey. From it He carved an image with curves, joints, limbs and segments. He solidified it till it dried up for a fixed time and a known duration. Then He blew into it out of His Spirit whereupon it took the pattern of a human being with mind that governs him, intelligence which he makes use of, limbs that serve him, organs that change his position, sagacity that differentiates between truth and untruth, tastes and smells, colours and species. He is a mixture of clays of different colours, cohesive materials, divergent contradictories and differing properties like heat, cold, softness and hardness.

Then Alláh asked the angels to fulfil His promise with them and to accomplish the pledge of His injunction to them by acknowledging Him through prostration to Him and submission to His honoured position. So Alláh said:

"*Be prostrate towards Adam and they prostrated except Iblís* (Satan)." (Qur'án, 2:34; 7:11; 17:61; 18:50; 20:116)

Self-importance withheld him and vice overcame him. So that he took pride in his own creation with fire and treated contemptuously the creation of clay. So Alláh allowed him time in order to let him fully deserve His wrath, and to complete (man's) test and to fulfil the promise (He had made to Satan). Thus, He said:

"*Verily you have been allowed time till the known Day.* " (Qur'án, 15:38; 38:81)

Thereafter, Alláh inhabited Adam (p.b.u.h.) in a house where He made his life pleasant and his stay safe, and He cautioned him of Iblís and his enmity. Then his enemy (Iblís) envied his abiding in Paradise and his contacts with the virtuous. So he changed his conviction into wavering and determination into weakness. He thus converted his happiness into fear and his prestige into shame. Then Alláh offered to Adam (p.b.u.h.) the chance to repent, taught him words of His Mercy, promised him return to His Paradise and sent him down to the place of trial and procreation of progeny.

Alláh chooses His Prophets

From his (Adam's) progeny Alláh chose prophets and took their pledge for his revelation and for carrying His message as their trust. In course of time many people perverted Alláh's trust with them and ignored His position and took compeers along with Him. Satan turned them away from knowing Him and kept them aloof from His worship. Then Alláh sent His Messengers and series of His prophets towards them to get them to fulfil the pledges of His creation, to recall to them His bounties, to exhort them by preaching, to unveil before them the hidden virtues of wisdom and show them the signs of His Omnipotence namely the sky which is raised over them, the earth that is placed beneath them, means of living that sustain them, deaths that make them die, ailments that turn them old and incidents that successively betake them.

Alláh never allowed His creation to remain without a Prophet deputised by Him, or a book sent down from Him or a binding argument or a standing plea. These Messengers were such that they did not feel little because of

smallness of their number or of largeness of the number of their falsifiers. Among them was either a predecessor who would name the one to follow or the follower who had been introduced by the predecessor.

The Prophethood of Muhammmad

In this way ages passed by and times rolled on, fathers passed away while sons took their places till Alláh deputised Muhammmad (peace be upon him and his progeny) as His Prophet, in fulfilment of His promise and in completion of His Prophethood. His pledge had been taken from the Prophets, his traits of character were well reputed and his birth was honourable. The people of the earth at this time were divided in different parties, their aims were separate and ways were diverse. They either likened Alláh with His creation or twisted His Names or turned to else than Him. Through Muhammmad (p.b.u.h.a.h.p.) Alláh guided them out of wrong and with his efforts took them out of ignorance.

Then Alláh chose for Muhammmad, peace be upon him and on his progeny, to meet Him, selected him for His own nearness, regarded him too dignified to remain in this world and decided to remove him from this place of trial. So He drew him towards Himself with honour. Alláh may shower His blessing on him, and his progeny.

The Holy Qur'án and Sunnah

But the Prophet left among you the same which other Prophets left among their peoples, because Prophets do not leave them untended (in dark) without a clear path and a standing ensign, namely the Book of your Creator clarifying its permission and prohibitions, its obligations and discretion, its repealing injunctions and the repealed ones, its permissible matters and compulsory ones, its particulars and the general ones, its lessons and illustrations, its long and the short ones, its clear and obscure ones, detailing its abbreviations and clarifying its obscurities.

In it there are some verses whose knowledge (1) is obligatory and others whose ignorance by the people is permissible. It also contains what appears to be obligatory according to the Book (2) but its repeal is signified by the Prophet's action (*sunnah*) or that which appears compulsory according to the Prophet's action but the Book allows not following it. Or there are those which are obligatory in a given time but not so after that time. Its prohibitions also differ. Some are major regarding which there exists the threat of fire (Hell), and others are minor for which there are prospects of forgiveness. There are also those of which a small portion is also acceptable (to Alláh) but they are capable of being expanded.

In this very sermon he spoke about Hajj

Alláh has made obligatory upon you the pilgrimage (Hajj) to His sacred House which is the turning point for the people who go to it as beasts or pigeons go towards spring water. Alláh the glorified made it a sign of their supplication before His Greatness and their acknowledgement of His Dignity. He selected from among His creation those who on listening to His call responded to it and testified His word. They stood in the position of His Prophets and resembled His angels who surround the Divine Throne securing all the benefits of performing His worship and hastening towards His promised forgiveness. Alláh the glorified made it (His sacred House) an emblem for Islam and an object of respect for those who turn to it. He made obligatory its pilgrimage and laid down its claim for which He held you responsible to discharge it. Thus, Alláh the glorified said:

> *". . . And (purely) for Alláh, is incumbent upon mankind, the pilgrimage to the House, for those who can afford to journey thither. And whoever denieth then verily, Alláh is Selfsufficiently independent of the worlds*" (Qur'án, 3:96).

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(1). "The foremost in religion (*dín*) is His knowledge." The literal meaning of *dín* is obedience, and its popular sense is code, whether literal sense is taken or the popular one, in either case, if the mind is devoid of any conception of Divinity, there would be no question of obedience, nor of following any code; because when there is no aim there is no point in advancing towards it; where there is no object in view there is no sense in making efforts to achieve it. Nevertheless, when the nature and guiding faculty of man bring him in contact with a superior Authority and his taste for obedience and impulse of submission subjugates him before a Deity, he finds himself bound by certain limitations as against abject freedom of activity. These very limitations are *dín* (Religion) whose point of commencement is knowledge of Alláh and acknowledgement of His Being.

After pointing out the essentials of Divine knowledge Amír al-mu'minín has described its important constituents and conditions. He has held those stages of such knowledge which people generally regard as the point of highest approach to be insufficient. He says that its first stage is that with the natural sense of search for the unknown and the guidance of conscience or on hearing from the followers of religions an image of the Unseen Being known as Alláh is formed in the mind. This image in fact is the forerunner of the obligation to thinking and reflection and to seeking His knowledge. But those who love idleness, or are under pressure of environment, do not undertake this search despite creation of such image and the image fails to get testified. In this case they remain deprived of Divine knowledge, and since their inaccess to the stage of testifying after the formation of image is by volition they deserve to be questioned about it. But one who is moved by the power of this image goes further and considers thinking and reflection necessary.

In this way one reaches the next stage in the attainment of Divine knowledge, namely to search for the Creator through diversification of creation and species of creatures, because every picture is a solid and inflexible guide to the existence of its painter and every effect to the action of its cause. When he casts his glance around himself he does not find a single thing which might have come into existence without the act of a maker so much so that he does not find the sign of a footstep without a walker nor a construction without a builder. How can he comprehend that this blue sky with the sun and the moon in its expanse and the earth with the exuberance of its grass and flowers could have come into existence without the action of a Creator. Therefore, after observing all that exists in the world and the regulated system of the entire creation no one can help concluding that there is a Creator for this world of diversities because existence cannot come out of non-existence, nor can existence sprout forth from nothingness.

The Holy Qur'án has pointed to this reasoning thus:

". . . What! about Alláh is there any doubt, the Originator of the heavens and the earth ?. . ." (14:10).

But this stage would also be insufficient if this testimony in favour of Alláh is tarnished by belief in the divinity of some other deity.

The third stage is that His existence should be acknowledged along with belief in Unity and Oneness. Without this the testimony to Alláh's existence cannot be complete because if more gods are believed in He would not be One whereas it is necessary that He should be One. The reason is that in case of more than one god the question would arise whether one of them created all this creation or all of them together. If one of them created it there should be some differential to distinguish him otherwise he would be accorded preferential position without reason, which is unacceptable to the mind.

If all have created it collectively then the position has only two forms; either he cannot perform his functions without the assistance of others or he is above the need for their assistance. The first case means his incapability and being in need of others while the other case means that they are several regular performers of a single act and the fallacy of both has already been shown. If we assume that all the gods performed the act of creation by dividing among themselves then, in this case all the creation will, not bear the same relationship towards the creator since each creature will bear relationship only to its own creator whereas every creature should have one and the same relationship to all creators. This is because all the creation should have one and the same relationship to all the creators as all the created in their capacity to accept effect and all the creators in their capacity to produce effect should be similar. In short there is no way but to acknowledge Him as One because in believing in numerous creators there remains no possibility of the existence of any other thing, and destruction proves implicit for the earth, the sky and everything in creation. Alláh the glorified has expressed this argument in the following words:

"Had there been in (the heavens and the earth [other]) gods except Alláh, they both had been in disorder. . ." (Qur'án, 21:22).

The fourth stage is that Alláh should be regarded free of all defects and deficiencies, and devoid of body, form, illustration, similarity, position of place or time, motion, stillness, incapability and ignorance because there can be no deficiency or defect in the perfect Being nor can anyone be deemed like Him because all these attributes bring down a being from the high position of the Creator to the low position of the created. That is why along with Unity, Alláh has held purity from deficiency of equal importance.

"Say: 'He (Alláh) is One (alone).
Alláh, the needless.

He begetteth not, nor is He begotten.
And there is none like unto Him" (Qur'án, 112:1-4).

"Vision perceiveth Him not, and He perceiveth (all) vision; He is the Subtle, the All-aware" (Qur'án, 6:104).

"So coin ye not any similitudes to Alláh; verily Alláh knoweth (every thing) and ye know not." (Qur'án, 16:74).

". . .Nothing whatsoever (is there) like the like of Him; and He (alone) is the All-hearing and the All-seeing." (Qur'án, 42:11)

The fifth stage of completing His Knowledge is that attributes should not be put in Him from outside lest there be duality in His Oneness, and deviating from its proper connotation Unity may fall in the labyrinth of one in three and three in one, because His Being is not a combination of essence and form so that attribute may cling to Him like smell in the flowers or brightness in the stars. Rather, He is the fountain head of all attributes and needs no medium for manifestation of His perfect Attributes. If He is named Omniscient it is because the signs of his knowledge are manifest. If He is called Omnipotent it is because every particle points to His Omnipotence and Activity, and if to Him is attributed the power to listen or to see it is because the cohesion of the entire creation and its administration cannot be done without hearing or seeing but the existence of these attributes in Him cannot be held to be in the same way as in the creation namely that He should be capable to know only after He acquires knowledge or He should be powerful and strong only after energy runs into His limbs because taking attributes as separate from His Being would connote duality and where there is duality unity disappears.

That is how Amír al-mu'minín has rejected the idea of attributes being addition to His Being, presented Unity in its true significance, and did not allow Unity to be tainted with stains of multiplicity. This does not mean that adjectives cannot at all be attributed to Him, as this would be giving support to those who are groping in the dark abyss of negativism, although every nook and comer in the entire existence is brimming with His attributes and every particle of creation stands witness that He has knowledge, He is powerful, He hears, He sees. He nurtures under His care and allows growth under His mercy. The intention is that for Him nothing can be suggested to serve as an adjunct to Him, because His self includes attributes and His attributes connote His Self.

Let us learn this very theme in the words of al-Imám Abú `Abdilláh Ja`far ibn Muhammmad as-Sádiq (p.b.u.h.) comparing it with the belief in Unity adopted by other religions and then appreciate who is the exponent of the true concept of Unity.

The Imám says:

"Our Alláh the Glorified, the Magnificent has ever had knowledge as His Self even though there was nothing to know, sight as His Self even though there was nothing to know, sight as His Self even though there was nothing to behold, hearing as His Self even though there was nothing to hear, and Potence as His Self even though there was nothing to be under His Potence. When He created the things and the object of knowledge came into existence His knowledge became related to the known, hearing related to the heard, sight related to the seen, and potence related to its object." (*at-Tawhíd* by ash-Shaykh as-Sadúq, p.139)

This is the belief over which the Imáms of the Prophet's family are unanimous, but the majority group has adopted a different course by creating the idea of differentiation between His Self and Attributes. ash-Shahristání says on page 42 of his book *Kitáb al-milal wa'n-nihal*:

According to Abu'l-Hasan al-Ash`arí, Alláh knows through (the attribute of) knowledge, is Powerful through activity, speaks through speech, hears through hearing and sees through sight.

If we regard attributes distinct from Self in this manner there would be two alternatives; either the attributes must have existed in Him from ever or they must have occurred later. In the first case we have to recognise as many eternal objects as the attributes which all will share with Him in being eternal, but "Alláh is above what the people deem Him to have equals." In the second case in addition to subjecting Him to the alternations it would also mean that before the acquiring of the attributes He was neither scient, nor powerful, nor hearer nor beholder and this runs counter to the basic tenet of Islam.

". . . Alláh hath decreed trade lawful and hath forbidden interest. . ." (Qur'án, 2:275)

"And when you have finished the prayer remember Alláh standing, and sitting, and reacting, and when ye are secure (from danger) establish prayer . . ." (Qur'án, 4:103)

"O' ye men! eat of what is in the earth lawful and good and follow not the foot-steps of Satan; for verily he is an open enemy unto you." (Qur'án, 2:168)

"(And) say thou: 'I am only a man like you, it is revealed unto me that your god is but one God, therefore whosoever desireth to meet his Lord, let him do good deeds, and associate not any one in the worship of his Lord'." (Qur'án, 18:110)

"What! enjoin ye upon the people righteousness and ye forget your own selves? Yet ye read the scripture? What: do ye not understand?" (Qur'án, 2:44).

(2). About the Qur'án, Amír al-mu'minín says that it contains description of the permitted and the forbidden acts such as "Alláh has allowed sale and purchase but prohibited usury."

It clarifies obligatory and optional acts such as "when you have finished the prayer (of fear) remember Alláh rising, sitting or lying and when you feel safe (from the enemy) then say the prayers (as usual)."

Here prayer is obligatory while other forms of remembering (Alláh) are optional. It has repealing and repealed verses such as about the period of seclusion after husband's death "four months and ten days" or the repealed one such as "till one year without going out" which shows that this period of seclusion should be one year. In particular places it permits the forbidden such as "whoever is compelled without being wilfully wrongful or transgressor, commits no sins."

It has positive injunctions such as "One should not add anyone with Alláh in worship." It has particular and general injunctions. Particular is the one where the word shows generality but the sense is limited such as "I have made you superior over worlds, O' Bani Isra'il."

Here the sense of "Worlds," is confined to that particular time, although the word is general in its literal meaning. The general injunctions is one which is extensive in meaning such as "Alláh has knowledge of everything." It has lessons and illustrations lessons such as "Alláh caught him in the punishment of this world and the next and there is lesson in it."

"So seized him Alláh, with the chastisement in the hereafter, and the life before (it)." (Qur'án, 79:25)

"Verily in this there is a lesson unto him who feareth (Alláh)." (Qur'án, 79:26)

"A kind word and pardon is better than charity that is followed by injury, and verily Alláh is Self-sufficient, the Most forbearing." (Qur'án, 2:263)

*"And remember when We made a covenant with you and raised the 'túr' (*the Mountain*) above you (*saying*), 'Hold ye fast that which We have bestowed upon you with the strength (*of determination*) and remember that which is therein so that you may guard (*yourself*) against evil'."* (Qur'án, 2:63)

"So we made it a lesson for (those of) their own times and for those (of their posterity) who came after them and an exhortation unto those who guard (themselves) against evil." (Qur'án, 2:66)

*"He it is Who fashioneth you in the wombs (*of your mothers*) as He liketh; There is no god but He, the All-mighty, the All-wise."* (Qur'án, 3:5)

"Obedience and a fair word; but when the affair is determined then if they be true to Alláh, it would certainly be better for them." (Qur'án, 47:21)

"O' those who believe! It is not lawful for you to inherit women against their will; and do not straiten them in order that ye may take a part of what ye have given, unless they are guilty of manifest lewdness; but deal kindly with them, and if ye hate them, it may be that ye hate a thing while Alláh hath placed in it abundant good." (Qur'án, 4:19)

*"Say thou (*unto the people of the Book*), 'Dispute ye with us about Alláh; whereas He is our Lord and your Lord, and for us are our deeds and for you are your deeds; to Him (*alone*) we are (*exclusively*) loyal?"* (Qur'án, 2:139)

"There is a lesson in it for him who fears Alláh," and illustration as "The example of those who spend their wealth in the way of Alláh is like a grain which grows seven ears each one of which bears hundred grains." It has unspecific and specific verses. Unspecific is one which has no limitation on specification such as "Recall when Moses told his people 'Alláh commands you to sacrifice a cow.'"

Specific is one where denotation is limited such as Alláh says that "the cow should be such that it has neither been used for ploughing nor for irrigation fields." There is clear and obscure in it. Clear is that which has no intricacy such as "Verily Alláh has sway over everything," while obscure is that whose meaning has complication such as "the Merciful (Alláh) occupies the throne," whose apparent meaning gives the impression as if Alláh is bodily sitting on the Throne although the intention is to press His authority and control. In it there are brief injunctions such as "establish prayer" and those of deep meanings such as the verses about which says:

"That the sense is not known except to Alláh and those immersed in knowledge." Then Amír al-mu'minín dilates upon this theme in a different style, he says that there are some things in it which are necessary to know, such as "So know that there is no god but Alláh" and there are others which are not necessary to know such as *"alif lám mím"* etc. It has also injunctions which have been repealed by the Prophet's action such as "As for your women who commit adultery get four male witnesses and if four witnesses do appear shut such women in the house till death ends their life." This punishment was current in early Islam but was later replaced by stoning in the case of married women. In it there are some injunctions which repealed the Prophet's action such as "Turn your face towards Masjid al-harám" by which the injunction for facing Bayt al-maqdis was repealed. It also contains injunctions which are obligatory only at a particular time after which their obligation ends, such as "when the call for prayer is made on Friday then hasten towards remembrance of Alláh." It has also indicated grades of prohibitions as the division of sins into light and serious ones - light such as "Tell the believers to lower their eyes" and serious ones such as "whoever kills a Believer wilfully his award is to remain in Hell for ever." It also contains injunctions where a little performance is enough but there is scope for further performance such as "Read the Qur'án as much as you easily can."

"Verily your Lord, certainly is He the All-mighty, the All-merciful." (Qur'án, 26:9)

"Say thou (O' Our Prophet Muhammmad) *unto the believer men that they cast down their gaze and guard their private parts; that is purer for them; verily Alláh is All-aware of what* (all) *ye do."* (Qur'án, 24:30)

"Not equal are those of the believers who sit (holding back) *other than those hurt, and those who strive in the way of Alláh with their wealth and their selves* (lives). *Alláh hath raised the strivers with their wealth and selves* (lives), *in rank above those sitting* (holding back); *Unto all* (in faith) *Alláh hath promised good; but those who strive, He hath distinguished above those who sit* (holding [by]) *a great recompense."* (Qur'án, 4:95)

"Verily, thy Lord knowest that thou standest up (in the Night Prayer) *night two-third of the night, and* (sometimes) *half of it, and* (sometimes) *a third of it, and a group of those with thee; and Alláh measureth* (well) *the night and the day; Knoweth He that never can ye take* (correct) *account of it, so turneth He unto you* (mercifully) *so recite ye whatever be easy* (in the prayers) *to be read of the Qur'án; Knoweth He that there may be among you sick, and others travelling in the earth seeking of the grace of Alláh, and others fighting in the way of Alláh, so recite ye as much as it can easily be done of it, and establish ye the* (regular) *prayers, and pay ye the* (prescribed) *poor-rate, and offer ye unto Alláh a goodly loan; and whatsoever of good ye send on before hand for yourselves, ye will* (surely) *find it with Alláh, that is the best and the greatest recompense; and seek ye the forgiveness of Alláh; Verily, Alláh is Oft-forgiving, the Most Merciful."* (Qur'án, 73:20)

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SERMON 2

Delivered on return from Siffín Arabia before proclamation of Prophethood

I praise Alláh seeking completion of His Blessing, submitting to His Glory and expecting safety from committing His sins. I invoke His help being in need of His Sufficiency (of protection). He whom He guides does not get astray, He with whom He is hostile gets no protection. He whom He supports does not remain needy. Praise is most weighty of all that is weighed and the most valuable of all that is treasured.

I stand witness that there is no god but Alláh the One. He has no like. My testimony has been tested in its frankness, and its essence is our belief. We shall cling to it for ever till we live and shall store it facing the tribulations that overtake us because it is the foundation stone of Belief *(ímán)* and the first step towards good actions and Divine pleasure. It is the means to keep Satan away.

I also stand witness that Muhammad (p.b.u.h.a.h.p.) is His slave and His Prophet. Alláh sent him with the illustrious religion, effective emblem, written Book,(1) effulgent light, sparkling gleam and decisive injunction in order to dispel doubts, present clear proofs, administer warning through signs and to warn of punishments. At that time people had fallen in vices whereby the rope of religion had been broken, the pillars of belief had been shaken, principles had been sacrileged, system had become topsy turvy, openings were narrow, passage was dark, guidance was unknown and darkness prevailed.

Alláh was being disobeyed, Satan was given support and Belief had been forsaken. As a result the pillars of religion fell down, its traces could not be discerned, its passages had been destroyed and its streets had fallen into decay. People obeyed Satan and treaded his paths. They sought water from his watering places. Through them Satan's emblems got flying and his standard was raised in vices which trampled the people under their hoofs, and treaded upon them with their feet. The vices stood on their toes (in full stature) and the people immersed in them were strayed, perplexed, ignorant and seduced as though in a good house(2) with bad neighbours. Instead of sleep they had wakefulness and for antimony they had tears in the eyes. They were in a land where the learned were in bridle (keeping their mouths shut) while the ignorant were honoured.

In the same sermon Amír al-mu'minín referred to Ál an-Nabí
(the Household of the Holy Prophet) as under:

They are the trustees of His secrets, shelter for His affairs, source of knowledge about Him, centre of His wisdom, valleys for His books and mountains of His religion. With them Alláh straightened the bend of religion's back and removed the trembling of its limbs.

In the same Sermon he spoke about the hypocrites

They sowed vices, watered them with deception and harvested destruction.

(Álu Muhammad)

None in the Islamic community can be taken at par with the Progeny(3) of the Prophet (Álu Muhammad). One who was under their obligation cannot be matched with them. They are the foundation of religion and pillar of Belief. The forward runner has to turn back to them while the follower has to overtake them. They possess the chief characteristics for vicegerency. In their favour exists the will and succession (of the Prophet). This is the time when right has returned to its owner and diverted to its centre of return.

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(1). The Preserved Record.

(2). Good House means 'Mecca' while the bad neighbours mean the 'Unbelievers of Quraysh.'

(3). About the Progeny of the Prophet Amír al-mu'minín has said that no person in the world can be brought at par with them, nor can any one be deemed their equal in sublimity, because the world is overladen with their obligations and has been able to secure eternal blessings only through their guidance. They are the corner stone and foundation of

religion and the sustenance for its life and survival. They are such strong pillars of knowledge and belief that they can turn away the stormy flow of doubt and suspicion. They are such middle course among the paths of excess and backwardness that if some one goes far towards excess and exaggeration or falls behind then unless he comes back or steps forward to that middle course he cannot be on the path of Islam. They possess all the characteristics which give the superiority in the right for vicegerency and leadership. Consequently, no one else in the *ummah* enjoys the right of patronage and guardianship. That is why the Prophet declared them his vicegerents and successors. About will and succession the commentator Ibn Abi'l-hadíd Mu`tazilí writes that there can be no doubt about the vicegerency of Amír al-mu'minín but succession cannot imply succession in position although the Shí`ite sect has so interpreted it. It rather implies succession of learning. Now, if according to him succession is taken to imply succession in learning even he does not seem to succeed in achieving his object, because even by this interpretation the right of succeeding the Prophet does not devolve on any other person. When it is agreed that learning is the most essential requirement of *khiláfah* (caliphate) because the most important functions of the Prophet's Caliph consist of dispensation of justice, solving problems of religious laws, clarifying intricacies and administration of religious penalties. If these functions are taken away from the Prophet's deputy his position will come down to that of a worldly ruler. He cannot be regarded as the pivot of religious authority. Therefore either we should keep governmental authority separate from Prophet's vicegerency or accept the successor of Prophet's knowledge to suit that position.

The interpretation of Ibn Abi'l-hadíd could be acceptable if Amír al-mu'minín had uttered this sentence alone, but observing that it was uttered soon after `Alí's (p.b.u.h.) recognition as Caliph and just after it the sentence "Right has returned to its owner" exists, this interpretation of his seems baseless. Rather, the Prophet's will cannot imply any other will except that for vicegerency and caliphate, and succession would imply not succession in property nor in knowledge because this was not an occasion to mention it here but it must mean the succession in the right leadership which stood proved as from Alláh not only on the ground of kinship but on the ground of qualities of perfection.

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SERMON 3

Known as the Sermon of ash-Shiqshiqiyyah(1)

Beware! By Alláh the son of Abú Quháfah (Abú Bakr)(2) dressed himself with it (the caliphate) and he certainly knew that my position in relation to it was the same as the position of the axis in relation to the hand-mill. The flood water flows down from me and the bird cannot fly upto me. I put a curtain against the caliphate and kept myself detached from it.

Then I began to think whether I should assault or endure calmly the blinding darkness of tribulations wherein the grown up are made feeble and the young grow old and the true believer acts under strain till he meets Alláh (on his death). I found that endurance thereon was wiser. So I adopted patience although there was pricking in the eye and suffocation (of mortification) in the throat. I watched the plundering of my inheritance till the first one went his way but handed over the Caliphate to Ibn al-Khattb after himself.

(Then he quoted al-A`shá's verse):

> *My days are now passed on the camel's back (in difficulty) while there were days (of ease) when I enjoyed the company of Jábír's brother Hayyán.*(3)

It is strange that during his lifetime he wished to be released from the caliphate but he confirmed it for the other one after his death. No doubt these two shared its udders strictly among themselves. This one put the Caliphate in a tough enclosure where the utterance was haughty and the touch was rough. Mistakes were in plenty and so also the excuses therefore. One in contact with it was like the rider of an unruly camel. If he pulled up its rein the very nostril would be slit, but if he let it loose he would be thrown. Consequently, by Alláh people got involved in recklessness, wickedness, unsteadiness and deviation.

Nevertheless, I remained patient despite length of period and stiffness of trial, till when he went his way (of death) he put the matter (of Caliphate) in a group(4) and regarded me to be one of them. But good Heavens! what had I to do with this "consultation"? Where was any doubt about me with regard to the first of them that I was now considered akin to these ones? But I remained low when they were low and flew high when they flew high. One of them turned against me because of his hatred and the other got inclined the other way due to his in-law relationship and this thing and that thing, till the third man of these people stood up with heaving breasts between his dung and fodder. With him his children of his grand-father, (Umayyah) also stood up swallowing up Alláh's wealth(5) like a camel devouring the foliage of spring, till his rope broke down, his actions finished him and his gluttony brought him down prostrate.

At that moment, nothing took me by surprise, but the crowd of people rushing to me. It advanced towards me from every side like the mane of the hyena so much so that Hasan and Husayn were getting crushed and both the ends of my shoulder garment were torn. They collected around me like the herd of sheep and goats. When I took up the reins of government one party broke away and another turned disobedient while the rest began acting wrongfully as if they had not heard the word of Alláh saying:

> *That abode in the hereafter, We assign it for those who intend not to exult themselves in the earth, nor* (to make) *mischief* (therein)*; and the end is* (best) *for the pious ones.*
> (Qur'án, 28:83)

Yes, by Alláh, they had heard it and understood it but the world appeared glittering in their eyes and its embellishments seduced them. Behold, by Him who split the grain (to grow) and created living beings, if people had not come to me and supporters had not exhausted the argument and if there had been no pledge of Alláh with the learned to the effect that they should not acquiesce in the gluttony of the oppressor and the hunger of the oppressed I would have cast the rope of Caliphate on its own shoulders, and would have given the last one the same treatment as to the first one. Then you would have seen that in my view this world of yours is no better than the sneezing of a goat.

(It is said that when Amír al-mu'minín reached here in his sermon a man of Iraq stood up and handed him over a writing. Amír al-mu'minín began looking at it, when Ibn `Abbás said, "O' Amír al-mu'minín, I wish you resumed your Sermon from where you broke it." Thereupon he replied, "O' Ibn `Abbás it was like the foam of a Camel which gushed

out but subsided." Ibn `Abbás says that he never grieved over any utterance as he did over this one because Amír al-mu'minín could not finish it as he wished to.)

ash-Sharíf ar-Radí says: The words in this sermon "like the rider of a camel" mean to convey that when a camel rider is stiff in drawing up the rein then in this scuffle the nostril gets bruised, but if he lets it loose in spite of the camel's unruliness, it would throw him somewhere and would get out of control. *"ashnaq an-náqah"* is used when the rider holds up the rein and raises the camel's head upwards. In the same sense the word *"shanaqa an-náqah"* is used. Ibn as-Sikkít has mentioned this in *Isláh al-mantiq*. Amír al-mu'minín has said *"ashnaqa lahá"* instead of *"ashnaqahá"*, this is because he has used this word in harmony with *"aslasa lahá"* and harmony could be retained only by using both in the same form. Thus, Amír al-mu'minín has used *"ashnaqa lahá"* as though in place of *"in rafa`a lahá ra'sahá"*, that is, "if he stops it by holding up the reins."

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(1). This sermon is known as the sermon of *ash-Shiqshiqiyyah*, and is counted among the most famous sermons of Amír al-mu'minín. It was delivered at ar-Rahbah. Although some people have denied it to be Amír al-mu'minín's utterance and by attributing it to as-Sayyid ar-Radí (or ash-Sharíf ar-Radí) have laid blame on his acknowledged integrity, yet truth-loving scholars have denied its veracity. Nor can there be any ground for this denial because `Alí's (p.b.u.h.) difference of view in the matter of Caliphate is not a secret matter, so that such hints should be regarded as something alien. And the events which have been alluded to in this sermon are preserved in the annals of history which testifies them word by word and sentence by sentence. If the same events which are related by history are recounted by Amír al-mu'minín then what is the ground for denying them? If the memory of discouraging circumstances faced by him soon after the death of the Prophet appeared unpalatable to him it should not be surprising. No doubt this sermon hits at the prestige of certain personalities and gives a set back to the faith and belief in them but this cannot be sustained by denying the sermon to be Amír al-mu'minín's utterance, unless the true events are analysed and truth unveiled; otherwise just denying it to be Amír al-mu'minín's utterance because it contains disparagement of certain individuals carries no weight, when similar criticism has been related by other historians as well. Thus (Abú `Uthmán) `Amr ibn Bahr al-Jáhiz has recorded the following words of a sermon of Amír al-mu'minín and they are not less weighty than the criticism in the "Sermon of *ash-Shiqshiqiyyah*."

> Those two passed away and the third one rose like the crow whose courage is confined to the belly. It would have been better if both his wings had been cut and his head severed.

Consequently, the idea that it is the production of as-Sayyid ar-Radí is far from truth and a result of partisanship and partiality. Or else if it is the result of some research it should be brought out. Otherwise, remaining in such wishful illusion does not alter the truth, nor can the force of decisive arguments be curbed down by mere disagreement and displeasure.

Now we set forth the evidence of those scholars and traditionists who have clearly held it to be Amír al-mu'minín's production, so that its historical importance should become known. Among these scholars some are those before as-Sayyid ar-Radí's period, some are his contemporaries and some are those who came after him but they all related it through their own chain of authority.

1) Ibn Abi'l-hadíd al-Mu`tazilí writes that his master Abu'l-Khayr Musaddiq ibn Shabíb al-Wásití (d. 605 A.H.) stated that he heard this sermon from ash-Shaykh Abú Muhammad `Abdulláh ibn Ahmad al-Baghdádí (d. 567 A.H.) known as Ibn al-Khashsháb and when he reached where Ibn `Abbás expressed sorrow for this sermon having remained incomplete Ibn al-Khashsháb said to him that if he had heard the expression of sorrow from Ibn `Abbás he would have certainly asked him if there had remained with his cousin any further unsatisfied desire because excepting the Prophet he had already spared neither the predecessors nor followers and had uttered all that he wished to utter. Why should therefore be any sorrow that he could not say what he wished? Musaddiq says that Ibn al-Khashsháb was a man of jolly heart and decent taste. I inquired from him whether he also regarded the sermon to be a fabrication when he replied "By Alláh, I believe it to be Amír al-mu'minín's word as I believe you to be Musaddiq ibn Shabíb." I said that some people regard it to be as-Sayyid ar-Radí's production when he replied: "How can ar-Radí have such guts or such style of writing. I have seen as-Sayyid ar-Radí's writings and know his style of composition. Nowhere does his writing match with this one and I have already seen it in books written two hundred years before the birth of as-Sayyid ar-Radí, and I have seen it in familiar writings about which I know by which scholars or men of letters they were compiled. At that time not only ar-Radí but even his father Abú Ahmad an-Naqíb has not been born."

2) Thereafter Ibn Abi'l-hadíd writes that he saw this sermon in the

compilations of his master Abu'l-Qásim (`Abdulláh ibn Ahmad) al-Balkhí (d. 317 A.H.). He was the Imám of the Mu'tazilites in the reign of al-Muqtadir Billáh while al-Muqtadir's period was far earlier than the birth of as-Sayyid ar-Radí.

3) He further writes that he saw this sermon in Abú Ja`far (Muhammad ibn `Abd ar-Rahmán), Ibn Qibah's book *al-Insáf*. He was the pupil of Abu'l-Qásim al-Balkhí and a theologian of Imámiyyah (Shi`ite) sect. (*Sharh* of Ibn Abi'l-hadíd, vol.1, pp.205-206)

4) Ibn Maytham al-Bahrání (d. 679 A.H.) writes in his commentary that he had seen one such copy of this sermon which bore writing of al-Muqtadir Billáh's minister Abu'l-Hasan `Alí ibn Muhammad ibn al-Furát (d. 312 A.H.). (*Sharh al-balághah*, vol.1., pp. 252-253)

5) al-`Allámah Muhammad Báqír al-Majlisí has related the following chain of authority about this Sermon from ash-Shaykh Qutbu'd-Dín ar-Ráwandí's compilation *Minháj al-bará`ah fi Sharh Nahj al-balághah*:

> ash-Shaykh Abú Nasr al-hasan ibn Muhammad ibn Ibráhím informed me from al-Hájib Abu'l-Wafá' Muhammad ibn Badí`, al-husayn ibn Ahmad ibn Badí` and al-husayn ibn Ahmad ibn `Abd ar-Rahmán and they from al-Háfiz Abú Bakr (Ahmad ibn Músá) ibn Marduwayh al-Isbahání (d. 416 A.H.) and he from al-Háfiz Abu'l-Qásim Sulaymán ibn Ahmad at-Tabarání (d. 360 A.H.) and he from Ahmad ibn `Alí al-Abbár and he from Is'háq ibn Sa`íd Abú Salamah ad-Dimashqí and he from Khulayd ibn Da`laj and he from `Atá' ibn Abí Rabáh and he from Ibn `Abbás. (*Bihar al-anwár*, 1st ed. vol.8, pp.160-161)

6) In the context al-`Allámah al-Majlisí has written that this sermon is also contained in the compilations of Abú `Alí (Muhammad ibn `Abd al-Wahháb) al-Jubbá 'í (d. 303 A.H.) .

7) In connection with this very authenticity al-`Allámah al-Majlisí writes:

> al-Qá_í `Abd al-Jabbár ibn Ahmad al-Asad'ábádí (d. 415A.H.) who was a strict Mu`tazilite explains some expressions of this sermon in his book *al-Mughní* and tries to prove that it does not strike against any preceding caliph but does not deny it to be Amír al-mu'minín's composition. (*ibid.*, p.161)

8) Abú Ja`far Muhammad ibn `Alí, Ibn Bábawayh (d. 381 A.H.) writes:

> Muhammad ibn Ibráhím ibn Is'háq al-Tálaqání told us that `Abd al-`Azíz ibn Yahyá al-Jalúdí (d. 332 A.H.) told him that Abú `Abdilláh Ahmad ibn `Ammár ibn Khálid told him that Yahyá ibn `Abd al-Hamíd al- Himmání (d. 228 A.H.) told him that `Isá ibn Ráshid related this sermon from `Alí ibn Hudhayfah and he from `Ikrimah and he from Ibn `Abbás. (`Ilal ash-shará'i`,vol.1, chap. 122, p.144; Ma`áni al-akhbár, chap.22, pp.360-361)

9) Then Ibn Bábawayh records the following chain of authorities :-

> Muhammad ibn `Alí Májilawayh related this sermon to us and he took it from his uncle Muhammad ibn Abi'l-Qásim and he from Ahmad ibn Abí `Abdilláh (Muhammad ibn Khálid) al-Barqí and he from his father and he from (Muhammad) Ibn Abí `Umayr and he from Abán ibn `Uthmán and he from Abán ibn Taghlib and he from `Ikrimah and he from Ibn `Abbás. (*`Ilal ash-shará'i`*, vol.1, chap.122, p.l46; *Ma`áni al-akhbár*, chap.22, p.361)

10) Abú Ahmad al-hasan ibn `Abdilláh ibn Sa`íd al-`Askarí (d.382 A.H.) who counts among great scholars of the Sunnis has written commentary and explanation of this sermon that has been recorded by Ibn Bábawayh in *`Ilal ash-shará'i`* and *Ma`áni al-akhbár*.

11) as-Sayyid Ni`matulláh al-Jazá'irí writes:

> The author of *Kitáb al-ghárát* Abú Is'háq, Ibráhím ibn Muhammad ath-Thaqafí al-Kúfí (d. 283 A.H.) has related this sermon through his own chain of authorities. The date of completion of writing this book is Tuesday the 13th Shawwál 255 A.H. and in the same year, Murta_á al-Músawí was born. He was older in age than his brother as-Sayyid ar-Radí. (*Anwár an-Nu`máníyyah*, p.37)

12) as-Sayyid Ra_í ad-Dín Abu'l-Qásim `Alí ibn Músá, Ibn Táwús al-husayní al-hullí (d. 664 A.H.) has related this sermon from *Kitáb al-ghárát* with the following chain of authorities:-

> This sermon was related to us by Muhammad ibn Yusuf who related it from al-hasan ibn `Alí ibn `Abd al-Karím az-Za`faráni and he from Muhammad ibn Zakariyyah al-Ghallábí and he from Ya`qúb ibn Ja`far ibn Sulaymán and he from his father and he from his grand-father and he from Ibn `Abbás. (Translation of *at-Tará'if*, p.202)

13) Shaykh at-Tá'ifah, Muhammad ibn al- Hasan at-Túsí (d. 460 A.H.) writes:

> (Abu'l-Fath Hilál ibn Muhammad ibn Ja`far) al-haffár related this sermon to us. He related it from Abu'l-Qásim (Ismá`íl ibn `Alí ibn `Alí) ad-Di`bilí and he from his father and he from his brother Di`bil (ibn `Alí al-Kuzá`í) and he from Muhammad ibn Salámah ash-Shámí and he from Zurárah ibn A`yan and he from Abú Ja`far Muhammad ibn `Alí and he from Ibn `Abbás. (*al-Amálí,* p.237)

14) ash-Shaykh al-Mufíd (Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn an-Nu`mán, d. 413 A.H.) who was the teacher of as-Sayyid ar-Radí writes about the chain of authorities of this sermon:

> A number of relaters of traditions have related this sermon from Ibn `Abbás through numerous chains. (*al-Irshád*, p.135)

15) `Alam al-Hudá (emblem of guidance) as-Sayyid al-Murta_á who was the elder brother of as-Sayyid ar-Radí has recorded it on pp. 203,204 of his book *ash-Sháfí.*

16) Abú Mansúr at-Tabarsí writes:

> A number of relaters have given an account of this sermon from Ibn `Abbás through various chains. Ibn `Abbás said that he was in the audience of Amír al-mu'minín at ar-Rahbah (a place in Kúfah) when conversation turned to Caliphate and those who had preceded him as Caliphs, when Amír al-mu'minín breathed a sigh and delivered this sermon. (*al-Ihtijáj*, p. 101)

17) Abu'l-Mu~affar Yúsuf ibn `Abdilláh and Sibt ibn al-Jawzí al-Hanafí (d. 654 A.H.) writes:

> Our ash-Shaykh Abu'l-Qásim an-Nafís al-Anbárí related this sermon to us through his chain of authorities that ends with Ibn `Abbás, who said that after allegiance had been paid to Amír al-mu'minín as Caliph he was sitting on the pulpit when a man from the audience enquired why he had remained quiet till then whereupon Amír al-mu'minín delivered this sermon extempore. (*Tadhkarat khawÁss al-ummah*, p.73)

18) al-Qá_í Ahmad ibn Muhammad, ash-Shiháb al-Khafájí (d. 1069 A.H.) writes with regard to its authenticity:

> It is stated in the utterances of Amír al-mu'minín `Alí (Alláh may be pleased with him) that "It is strange during life time he (Abú Bakr) wanted to give up the Caliphate but he strengthened its foundation for the other one after his death." (*Sharh durrat al-ghawwÁs*, p.17)

19) ash-Shaykh `Alá ad-Dawlah as-Simnání writes:

> Amír al-mu'minín Sayyid al-`Árifín `Alí (p.b.u.h.) has stated in one of his brilliant Sermons "this is the Shiqshiqah that burst forth." (*al-`Urwah lí ahl al-khalwah wa'l-jalwah*, p3, manuscript in Nasiriah Library, Lucknow, India)

20) Abu'l-Fa_l Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Maydání (d. 518 A.H.) has written in connection with the word Shiqshiqah:

> One sermon of Amír al-mu'minín `Alí is known as Khutbah ash-Shiqshiqiyyah (the sermon of the Camel's Foam). (*Majma` al-amthál*, vol.1, p.369)

21) In fifteen places in *an-Niháyah* while explaining the words of this sermon Abu's-Sa`ádát Mubárak ibn Muhammad, Ibn al-Athír al-Jazarí (d. 606 A.H.) has acknowledged it to be Amír al-mu'minín's utterance.

22) Shaykh Muhammad Táhir Patní while explaining the same words in *Majma` bihár al-anwár* testifies this sermon to be Amír al-mu'minín's by saying, "`Alí says so."

23) Abu'l-Fa_l ibn Manzúr (d. 711 A.H.) has acknowledged it as Amír al-mu'minín's utterance in *Lisán al-`Arab*, vol.12, p.54 by saying, "In the sayings of `Alí in his sermon 'It is the camel's foam that burst forth then subsided.'"

24) Majdu'd-Dín al-Firúz'ábádí (d. 816/817 A.H.) has recorded under the word *"Shiqshiqah"* in his lexicon (*al-Qámús*, vol.3, p.251):

> *Khutbah ash-Shiqshiqiyyah* is by `Alí so named because when Ibn `Abbás asked him to resume it where he had left it, he said "O' Ibn `Abbás! it was the foam of a camel that burst forth then subsided."

25) The compiler of *Muntahá al-adab* writes:

> *Khutbah ash-Shiqshiqiyyah* of `Alí is attributed to `Alí (Alláh may honour his face).

26) ash-Shaykh Muhammad `Abduh, Muftí of Egypt, recognising it as Amír al-mu'minín's utterance, has written its explanations.

27) Muhammad Muhyi'd-Dín `Abd al-Hámid, Professor in the Faculty of Arabic Language, al-Azhar University has written annotations on *Nahj al-balághah* adding a foreword in the beginning wherein he recognises all such sermons which contain disparaging remarks to be the utterances of Amír al-mu'minín.

In the face of these evidences and undeniable proofs is there any scope to hold that it is not Amír al-mu'minín's production and that as-Sayyid ar-Radí prepared it himself?

(2). Amír al-mu'minín has referred to Abú Bakr's accession to the Caliphate metaphorically as having dressed himself with it. This was a common metaphor. Thus, when `Uthmán was called to give up the Caliphate he replied, "I shall not put off this shirt which Alláh has put on me." No doubt Amír al-mu'minín has not attributed this dressing of Caliphate to Alláh but to Abú Bakr himself because according to unanimous opinion his Caliphate was not from Alláh but his own affair. That is why Amír al-mu'minín said that Abú Bakr dressed himself with the Caliphate. He knew that this dress had been stitched for his own body and his position with relation to the Caliphate was that of the axis in the hand-mill which cannot retain its central position without it nor be of any use. Similarly, he held "I was the central pivot of the Caliphate, were I not there, its entire system would have gone astray from the pivot. It was I who acted as a guard for its organisation and order and guided it through all difficulties. Currents of learning flowed from my bosom and watered it on all sides. My position was high beyond imagination but lust of world seekers for government became a tumbling stone for me and I had to confine myself to seclusion. Blinding darkness prevailed all round and there was intense gloom everywhere. The young grew old and the old departed for the graves but this patience-breaking period would not end. I kept watching with my eyes the plundering of my own inheritance and saw the passing of Caliphate from one hand to the other but remained patient as I could not stop their high-handedness for lack of means."

NEED FOR THE PROPHET'S CALIPH AND
THE MODE OF HIS APPOINTMENT

After the Prophet of Islam the presence of such a personality was inevitable who could stop the community from disintegration and guard the religious law against change, alteration and interference by those who wanted to twist it to suit their own desires. If this very need is denied then there is no sense in attaching so much importance to the succession of the Prophet that the assemblage in Saqífah of Banú Sá`idah should have been considered more important than the burial of the Prophet. If the need is recognised, the question is whether or not the Prophet too realised it. If it is held he could not attend to it and appreciate its need or absence of need it would be the biggest proof for regarding the Prophet's mind to be blank for thinking of means to stop the evils of innovations and apostasy in spite of having given warnings about them. If it is said that he did realise it but had to live it unresolved on account of some advantage then instead of keeping it hidden the advantage should be clearly indicated otherwise silence without purpose would constitute delinquency in the discharge of the obligations of Prophethood. If there was some impediment, it should be disclosed otherwise we should agree that just as the Prophet did not leave any item of religion incomplete he did not leave this matter either and did propose such a course of action for it, that if it was acted upon religion would have remained safe against the interference of others.

The question now is what was that course of action. If it is taken to be the consensus of opinion of the community then it cannot truly take place as in such consensus acquiescence of every individual is necessary; but taking into account the difference in human temperaments it seems impossible that they would agree on any single point. Nor is there any example where on such matters there has been no single voice of dissent. How then can such a fundamental need be made dependent on the occurrence of such an impossible event - need on which converges the future of Islam and the good of the Muslims. Therefore, the mind is not prepared to accept this criterion. Nor is tradition in harmony with it, as al-Qádí `Adud ad-Dínal-'Íjí has written in *Sharh al-mawáqif*:

> You should know that Caliphate cannot depend upon unanimity of election because no logical or traditional argument can be advanced for it.

In fact when the advocates of unanimous election found that unanimity of all votes is difficult they adopted the agreement of the majority as a substitute for unanimity, ignoring the difference of the minority. In such a case also it often happens that the force of fair and foul or correct and incorrect ways turns the flow of the majority opinion in the direction where there is neither individual distinction nor personal merit as a result of which competent persons remain hidden while incompetent individuals stand forward. When capabilities remain so curbed and personal ends stand in the way as hurdles, how can there be expectation for the election of correct person. Even if it is assumed that all voters have an independent unbiased view, that none of them has his own objective and that none has any other consideration, it is not necessary that every verdict of the majority should be correct, and that it cannot go astray. Experience shows that after experiment the majority has held its own verdict to be wrong. If every verdict of the majority is correct then its first verdict should be wrong because the verdict which holds it wrong is also that of the majority. In this circumstances if the election of the Caliph goes wrong who would be responsible for the mistake, and who should face the blame for the ruination of the Islamic polity. Similarly on whom would be the liability for the bloodshed and slaughter following the turmoil and activity of the elections. When it has been seen that even those who sat in the audience of the Holy Prophet could not be free of mutual quarrel and strife how can others avoid it.

If with a view to avoid mischief it is left to the people of authority to choose anyone they like then here too the same friction and conflict would prevail because here again convergence of human temperaments on one point is not necessary nor can they be assumed to rise above personal ends. In fact here the chances of conflict and collision would be stronger because if not all at least most of them would themselves be candidates for that position and would not spare any effort to defeat their opponent, creating impediments in his way as best as possible. Its inevitable consequence would be mutual struggle and mischief-mongering. Thus, it would not be possible to ward off the mischief for which this device was adopted, and instead of finding a proper individual the community would just become an instrument for the achievement of personal benefits of the others. Again, what would be the criterion for these people in authority? The same as has usually been, namely whoever collects a few supporters and is able to create commotion in any meeting by use of forceful words would count among the people of authority. Or would capabilities also be judged? If the mode of judging the capabilities is again this very common vote then the same complications and conflicts would arise here too, to avoid which this way was adopted. If there is some other standard, then instead of judging the capabilities of the voters by it why not judge the person who is considered suitable for the position in view. Further, how many persons in authority would be enough to give a verdict? Apparently a verdict once accepted would be precedent for good and the number that would give this verdict would become the criterion for future. al-Qádí `Adud ad-Dín al-'Íjí writes:

> Rather the nomination of one or two individuals by the people in authority is enough because we know that the companions who were strict in religion deemed it enough as the nomination of Abú Bakr by `Umar and of `Uthmán by `Abd ar-Rahmán. (*Sharh al-mawáqif*, p.351)

This is the account of the "unanimous election" in the Hall of Baní Sá`idah and the activity of the consultative assembly: that is, one man's action has been given the name of unanimous election and one individual's deed given the name of consultative assembly. Abú Bakr had well understood this reality that election means the vote of a person or two only which is to be attributed to common simple people. That is why he ignored the requirements of unanimous election, majority vote or method of choosing through electoral assembly and appointed `Umar by nomination. `Á'ishah also considered that leaving the question of caliphate to the vote of a few particular individuals meant inviting mischief and trouble. She sent a word to `Umar on his death saying:

> Do not leave the Islamic community without a chief. Nominate a Caliph for it and leave it not without an authority as otherwise I apprehend mischief and trouble.

When the election by those in authority proved futile it was given up and only "might is right" became the criteria—namely whoever subdues others and binds them under his sway and control is accepted as the Caliph of the Prophet and his true successor. These are those self-adopted principles in the face of which all the Prophet's sayings uttered in the "Feast of the Relatives," on the night of *hijrah*, at the battle of Tabúk, on the occasion of conveying the Qur'ánic chapter *"al-Bará'ah"* (*at-Tawbah*, chap.9) and at Ghadír (the spring of) Khumm. The strange thing is that when each of the first three caliphates is based on one individual's choice how can this very right to choose be denied to the Prophet himself, particularly when this was the only way to end all the dissension, namely that the Prophet should have himself settled it and saved the community from future disturbances and spared it from leaving this decision in the hands of people who were themselves involved in personal aims and objects. This is the correct procedure which stands to reason and which has also the support of the Prophet's definite sayings.

(3). Hayyán ibn as-Samín al-Hanafí of Yamámah was the chief of the tribe Banú Hanifah and the master of fort and army. Jábir is the name of his younger brother while al-A`shá whose real name was Maymún ibn Qays ibn Jandal enjoyed the position of being his bosom friend and led a decent happy life through his bounty. In this verse he has compared his current life with the previous one that is the days when he roamed about in search of livelihood and those when he led a happy life in Hayyán's company. Generally Amír al-mu'minín's quoting of this verse has been taken to compare this troubled period with the peaceful days passed under the care and protection of the Prophet when he was free from all sorts of troubles and enjoyed mental peace. But taking into account the occasion for making this comparison and the subject matter of the verse it would not be far fetched if it is taken to indicate the difference between the unimportant position of those in power during the Prophet's life time and the authority and power enjoyed by them after him, that is, at one time in the days of the Prophet no heed was paid to them because of `Alí's personality but now the time had so changed that the same people were masters of the affairs of the Muslim world.

(4). When `Umar was wounded by Abú Lu'lu'ah and he saw that it was difficult for him to survive because of the deep wound, he formed a consultative committee and nominated for it `Alí ibn Abí Tálib, `Uthmán ibn `Affán, `Abd ar-Rahmán ibn `Awf, az-Zubayr ibn al-`Awwám, Sa`d ibn Abí Waqqás, and Talhah ibn `Ubaydilláh and bound them that after three days of his death they should select one of themselves as the Caliph while for those three days Suhayb should act as Caliph. On receipt of these instructions some members of the committee requested him to indicate what ideas he had about each of them to enable them to proceed further in their light. `Umar therefore disclosed his own view about each individual. He said that Sa`d was harsh-tempered and hot headed; `Abd ar-Rahmán was the Pharaoh of the community; az-Zubayr was, if pleased, a true believer but if displeased an unbeliever; Talhah was the embodiment of pride and haughtiness, if he was made caliph he would put the ring of the caliphate on his wife's finger while `Uthmán did not see beyond his kinsmen. As regards `Alí he is enamoured of the Caliphate although I know that he alone can run it on right lines. Nevertheless, despite this admission, he thought it necessary to constitute the consultative Committee and in selecting its members and laying down the working procedure he made sure that the Caliphate would take the direction in which he wished to turn it. Thus, a man of ordinary prudence can draw the conclusion that all the factors for `Uthmán's success were present therein. If we look at its members we see that one of them namely `Abd ar-Rahmán ibn `Awf is the husband of `Uthmán's sister, next Sa`d ibn Abí Waqqás besides bearing malice towards `Alí is a relation and kinsman of `Abd ar-Rahmán. Neither of them can be taken to go against `Uthmán. The third Talhah ibn `Ubaydilláh about whom Prof. Muhammad `Abduh writes in his annotation on *Nahj al-balághah*:

> Talhah was inclined towards `Uthmán and the reason for it was no less than that he was against `Alí, because he himself was at-Taymí and Abú Bakr's accession to the Caliphate had created bad blood between Baní Taym and Banú Háshim.

As regards az-Zubayr, even if he had voted for `Alí, what could his single vote achieve. According to at-Tabarí's statement Talhah was not present in Medina at that time but his absence did not stand in the way of `Uthmán's success. Rather even if he were present, as he did actually reach at the meeting (of the Committee), and he is taken to be `Alí's supporter, still there could be no doubt in `Uthmán's success because `Umar's sagacious mind had set the working procedure that:

> If two agree about one and the other two about another then `Abdulláh ibn `Umar should act as the arbitrator. The group whom he orders should choose the Caliph from among themselves. If they do not accept `Abdulláh ibn `Umar's verdict, support should be given to the group which includes `Abd ar-Rahmán ibn `Awf, but if the others do not agree they should be beheaded for opposing this verdict. (at-Tabarí, vol.1, pp.2779-2780; Ibn al-Athír, vol.3, p.67).

Here disagreement with the verdict of `Abdulláh ibn `Umar has no meaning since he was directed to support the group which included `Abd ar-Rahmán ibn `Awf. He had ordered his son `Abdulláh and Suhayb that:

If the people differ, you should side with the majority, but if three of them are on one side and the other three on the other, you should side with the group including `Abd ar-Rahmán ibn `Awf. (at-Tabarí, vol.1, pp.2725,2780; Ibn al-Athír, vol.3, pp.51,67).

In this instruction the agreement with the majority also means support of `Abd ar-Rahmán because the majority could not be on any other side since fifty blood-thirsty swords had been put on the heads of the opposition group with orders to fall on their heads on `Abd ar-Rahmán's behest. Amír al-mu'minín's eye had fore-read it at that very moment that the Caliphate was going to `Uthmán as appears from his following words which he spoke to al-`Abbás ibn `Abd al-Muttalib:

"The Caliphate has been turned away from us." al-`Abbás asked how could he know it. Then he replied, "`Uthmán has also been coupled with me and it has been laid down that the majority should be supported; but if two agree on one and two on the other, then support should be given to the group which includes `Abd ar-Rahmán ibn `Awf. Now Sa`d will support his cousin `Abd ar-Rahmán who is of course the husband of `Uthmán's sister." (*ibid*)

However, after `Umar's death this meeting took place in the room of `Á'ishah and on its door stood Abú Talhah al-Ansárí with fifty men having drawn swords in their hands. Talhah started the proceedings and inviting all others to be witness said that he gave his right of vote to `Uthmán. This touched az-Zubayr's sense of honour as his mother Safiyyah daughter of `Abd al-Muttalib was the sister of Prophet's father. So he gave his right of vote to `Alí. Thereafter Sa`d ibn Abí Waqqás made his right of vote to `Abd ar-Rahmán. This left three members of the consultative committee out of whom `Abd ar-Rahmán said that he was willing to give up his own right of vote if `Alí (p.b.u.h.) and `Uthmán gave him the right to choose one of them or one of these two should acquire this right by withdrawing. This was a trap in which `Alí had been entangled from all sides namely that either he should abandon his own right or else allow `Abd ar-Rahmán to do as he wished. The first case was not possible for him; that is, to give up his own right and elect `Uthmán or `Abd ar-Rahmán. So, he clung to his right, while `Abd ar-Rahmán separating himself from it assumed this power and said to Amír al-mu'minín, "I pay you allegiance on your following the Book of Alláh, the *sunnah* of the Prophet and the conduct of the two Shaykhs, (Abú Bakr and `Umar). `Alí replied, "Rather on following the Book of Alláh, the *sunnah* of the Prophet and my own findings." When he got the same reply even after repeating the question thrice he turned to `Uthmán saying, "Do you accept these conditions." He had no reason to refuse and so he agreed to the conditions and allegiance was paid to him. When Amír al mu'minín saw his rights being thus trampled he said:

"This is not the first day when you behaved against us. I have only to keep good patience. Alláh is the Helper against whatever you say. By Alláh, you have not made `Uthmán Caliph but in the hope that he would give back the Caliphate to you."

After recording the events of *ash-Shúrá* (consultative committee), Ibn Abi'l-hadíd has written that when allegiance had been paid to `Uthmán, `Alí addressed `Uthmán and `Abd ar-Rahmán saying, "May Alláh sow the seed of dissension among you," and so it happened that each turned a bitter enemy of the other and `Abd ar-Rahmán did not ever after speak to `Uthmán till death. Even on death bed he turned his face on seeing him.

On seeing these events the question arises whether *ash-Shúrá* (consultative committee) means confining the matter to six persons, thereafter to three and finally to one only. Also whether the condition of following the conduct of the two Shaykhs for Caliphate was put by `Umar or it was just a hurdle put by `Abd ar-Rahmán between `Alí (p.b.u.h.) and the Caliphate, although the first Caliph did not put forth this condition at the time of nominating the second Caliph, namely that he should follow the former's footsteps. What then was the occasion for this condition here?

However, Amír al-mu'minín had agreed to participate in it in order to avoid mischief and to put an end to arguing so that others should be silenced and should not be able to claim that they would have voted in his favour and that he himself evaded the consultative committee and did not give them an opportunity of selecting him.

(5) About the reign of the third Caliph, Amír al-mu'minín says that soon on `Uthmán's coming to power Banú Umayyah got ground and began plundering the *Bayt al-mál* (public fund), and just as cattle on seeing green grass after drought trample it away, they recklessly fell upon Alláh's money and devoured it. At last this self-indulgence and nepotism brought him to the stage when people besieged his house, put him to sword and made him vomit all that he had swallowed.

The maladministration that took place in this period was such that no Muslim can remain unmoved to see that Companions of high position were lying uncared for, they were stricken with poverty and surrounded by pennilessness while control over *Bayt al-mál* (public fund) was that of Banú Umayyah, government positions were occupied by their young and inexperienced persons, special Muslim properties were owned by them, meadows provided grazing but to their cattle, houses were built but by them, and orchards were but for them. If any compassionate person spoke about these excesses his ribs were broken, and if someone agitated this capitalism he was externed from the city. The uses to which *zakát* and charities which were meant for the poor and the wretched and the public fund which was the common property of the Muslims were put may be observed from the following few illustrations;

1) al-Hakam ibn Abi'l-`Ás who had been exiled from Medina by the Prophet was allowed back in the city not only against the Prophet's sunnah but also against the conduct of the first two Caliphs and he was paid three hundred thousand Dirhams from the public fund. (*Ansáb al-ashráf*, vol.5, pp.27, 28, 125)

2) al-Walíd ibn `Uqbah who has been named hypocrite in the Qur'án was paid one hundred thousand Dirhams from the Muslim's public fund. (*al-`Iqd al-faríd*, vol.3, p.94)

3) The Caliph married his own daughter Umm Ában to Marwán ibn al-Hakam and paid him one hundred thousand Dirhams from the public fund. (*Sharh* of Ibn Abi'l-hadíd, vol.1, pp.198-199).

4) He married his daughter `Á'ishah to Hárith ibn al-Hakam and granted him one hundred thousand Dirhams from the public fund. (*ibid*.)

5) `Abdulláh ibn Khálid was paid four hundred thousand Dirhams. (*al-Ma`árif* of Ibn Qutaybah, p.84)

6) Allowed the *khums* (one fifth religious duty) from Africa (amounting to five hundred thousand Dinars) to Marwán ibn al-Hakam. (*ibid*)

7) Fadak which was withheld from the angelic daughter of the Prophet on the ground of being general charity was given as a royal favour to Marwán ibn al-Hakam. (*ibid*.)

8) Mahzúr a place in the commercial area of Medina which had been declared a public trust by the Prophet was gifted to Hárith ibn al-Hakam. (*ibid*.)

9) In the meadows around Medina no camel except those of Banú Umayyah were allowed to graze. (*Sharh* of Ibn Abi'l-hadíd, vol.l, p.l99)

10) After his death (`Uthmán's) one hundred and fifty thousand Dinars (gold coins) and one million Dirhams (silver coins) were found in his house. There was no limit to tax free lands; and the total value of the landed estate he owned in Wádí al-Qurá and Hunayn was one hundred thousand Dinars. There were countless camels and horses. (*Murúj adh-dhahab*, vol.l, p.435)

11) The Caliph's relations ruled all the principal cities. Thus, at Kúfah, al-Walíd ibn `Uqbah was the governor but when in the state of intoxication of wine he led the morning prayer in four instead of two rak`ah and people agitated he was removed, but the Caliph put in his place a hypocrite like Sa`id ibn al-`Ás. In Egypt `Abdulláh ibn Sa`d ibn Abí Sarh, in Syria Muáwiyah ibn Abí Sufyán, and in Basrah, `Abdulláh ibn `Ámir were the governors appointed by him (*ibid*.)

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SERMON 4

Amír al-mu'minín's far-sightedness and his staunch conviction in Belief

Through us you got guidance in the darkness and secured high position, and through us you got out of the gloomy night. The ears which do not listen to the cries may become deaf. How can one who remained deaf to the loud cries (of the Qur'án and the Prophet) listen to (my) feeble voice. The heart that has ever palpitated (with fear of Alláh) may get peace.

I always apprehended from you consequences of treachery and I had seen you through in the garb of the deceitful. The curtain of religion had kept me hidden from you but the truth of my intentions disclosed you to me. I stood for you on the path of truth among misleading tracks where you met each other but there was no leader and you dug but got no water.

Today I am making these dumb things speak to you (i.e. my suggestive ideas and deep musings etc.) which are full of descriptive power. The opinion of the person who abandons me may get astray. I have never doubted in the truth since it has been shown to me. Músá (Moses) (1) did not entertain fear for his own self. Rather he apprehended mastery of the ignorant and away of deviation. Today we stand on the cross-roads of truth and untruth. The one who is sure of getting water feels no thirst.

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(1). The reference is to that even of Moses when sorcerers were sent for to confront him and they showed their sorcery by throwing ropes and sticks on the ground and Moses felt afraid. Thus, the Qur'án records:

> *. . . it seemed to him (Moses), by their sorcery as if they were running. Then Moses felt in himself a fear. We said: Fear not! Verily thou art the uppermost*. (20:66-68)

Amír al-mu'minín says that the ground for Moses fear was not that since he saw ropes and sticks moving he might have entertained fear for his life but the cause of his fear was lest people be impressed with this sorcery and get astray, and untruth might prevail on account of this craft. That is why Moses was not consoled by saying that his life was safe but by saying that he would prove superior, and his claim would be upheld. Since his fear was for the defeat of the truth and victory of the untruth, not for his own life, the consideration was given to him for the victory of truth and not for the protection of his life.

Amír al-mu'minín also means that he too had the same fear *viz*. that the people should not be caught in the trap of these (Talhah, az-Zubayr, etc.) and fail into misguidance by getting astray from the true faith. Otherwise, he himself never feared for his own life.

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SERMON 5

Delivered when the Holy Prophet died and `Abbás ibn `Abd al-Muttalib and Abú Sufyán ibn Harb offered to pay allegiance to Amír al-mu'minín for the Caliphate

O' People! (1)

Steer clear through the waves of mischief by boats of deliverance, turn away from the path of dissension and put off the crowns of pride. Prosperous is one who rises with wings (i.e. when he has power) or else he remains peaceful and others enjoy ease. It (i.e. the aspiration for Caliphate) is like turbid water or like a morsel that would suffocate the person who swallows it. One who plucks fruits before ripening is like one who cultivated in another's field.

If I speak out they would call me greedy towards power but if I keep quiet they would say I was afraid of death. It is a pity that after all the ups and downs (I have been through). By Alláh the son of Abú Tálib (2) is more familiar with death than an infant with the breast of its mother. I have hidden knowledge, if I disclose it you will start trembling like ropes in deep wells.

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(1). When the Holy Prophet died Abú Sufyán was not in Medina. He was coming back when on his way he got the news of this tragedy. At once he enquired who had become the leader and Chief. He was told that people had paid allegiance to Abú Bakr. On hearing this the acknowledged mischief-monger of Arabia went into deep thought and eventually went to `Abbás ibn `Abd al-Muttalib with a proposal. He said to him, "Look, these people have by contrivance made over the Caliphate to the Taym and deprived Banú Háshim of it for good, and after himself this man would place over our heads a haughty man of Banú `Adí. Let us go to `Alí ibn `Abí Tálib and ask him to get out of his house and take to arms to secure his right." So taking `Abbás with him he came to `Alí and said: "Let me your hand; I pay allegiance to you and if anyone rises in opposition I would fill the streets of Medina with men of cavalry and infantry." This was the most delicate moment for Amír al-mu'minín. He regarded himself as the true head and successor of the Prophet while a man with the backing of his tribe and party like Abú Sufyán was ready to support him. Just a signal was enough to ignite the flames of war. But Amír al-mu'minín's foresight and right judgement saved the Muslims from civil war as his piercing eyes perceived that this man wanted to start civil war by rousing the passions of tribal partisanship and distinction of birth, so that Islam should be struck with a convulsion that would shake it to its roots. Amír al-mu'minín therefore rejected his counsel and admonished him severely and spoke forth the words, whereby he has stopped people from mischief mongering, and undue conceit, and declared his stand to be that for him there were only two courses - either to take up arms or to sit quietly at home. If he rose for war there was no supporter so that he could suppress these rising insurgencies. The only course left was quietly to wait for the opportunity till circumstances were favourable.

Amír al-mu'minín's quietness at this stage was indicative of his high policy and far-sightedness, because if in those circumstances Medina had become the centre of war its fire would have engulfed the whole of Arabia in its flames. The discord and scuffle that had already begun among *muhájirún* (those who came from Mecca) and *ansár* (the locals of Medina) would have increased to maximum, the wire-pullings of the hypocrites would have had full play, and Islam's ship would have been caught in such a whirlpool that its balancing would have been difficult; Amír al-mu'minín suffered trouble and tribulations but did not raise his hands. History is witness that during his life at Mecca the Prophet suffered all sorts of troubles but he was not prepared to clash or struggle by abandoning patience and endurance, because he realised that if war took place at that stage the way for Islam's growth and fruition would be closed. Of course, when he had collected supporters and helpers enough to suppress the flood of unbelief and curb the disturbances, he rose to face the enemy. Similarly, Amír al-mu'minín, treating the life of the Prophet as a torch for his guidance refrained from exhibiting the power of his arm because he was realising that rising against the enemy without helpers and supporters would become a source of revolt and defeat instead of success and victory. Therefore, on this occasion Amír al-mu'minín has likened the desire for Caliphate to turbid water or a morsel suffocating the throat. Thus, even where people had forcibly snatched this morsel and wanted to swallow it by forcible thrusting, it got stuck up in their throat. They could neither swallow it nor vomit it out. That is, they could neither manage it as is apparent from the blunders they committed in connection with Islamic injunctions, nor were they ready to cast off the knot from their neck.

He reiterated the same ideas in different words thus: “If had I attempted to pluck the unripe fruit of Caliphate then by this the orchard would have been desolated and I too would have achieved nothing, like these people who cultivate on other’s land but can neither guard it, nor water it at proper time, nor reap any crop from it. The position of these people is that if I ask them to vacate it so that the owner should cultivate it himself and protect it, they say how greedy I am, while if I keep quiet they think I am afraid of death. They should tell me on what occasion did I ever feel afraid, or flew from battle-field for life, whereas every small or big encounter is proof of my bravery and a witness to my daring and courage. He who plays with swords and strikes against hillocks is not afraid of death. I am so familiar with death that even an infant is not so familiar with the breast of its mother. Hark! The reason for my silence is the knowledge that the Prophet has put in my bosom. If I divulge it you would get perplexed and bewildered. Let some days pass and you would know the reason of my inaction, and perceive with your own eyes what sorts of people would appear on this scene under the name of Islam, and what destruction they would bring about. My silence is because this would happen, otherwise it is not silence without reason.”

A Persian hemistch says:

“Silence has meaning which cannot be couched in words.”

(2). About death Amír al-mu’minín says that it is so dear to him that even an infant does not so love to leap towards the source of its nourishment while in its mother’s lap. An infant’s attachment with the breast of its mother is under the effect of a natural impulse but the dictates of natural impulses change with the advance of age. When the limited period of infancy ends and the infant’s temperament changes, he does not like even to look at what was so familiar to him but rather turns his face from it in disgust. But the love of prophets and saints for union with Alláh is mental and spiritual, and mental and spiritual feelings do not change, nor does weakness or decay occur in them. Since death is the means and first rung towards this goal their love for death increases to such an extent that its rigours become the cause of pleasure for them and its bitterness proves to be the source of delight for their taste. Their love for it is the same as that of the thirsty for the well or that of a lost passenger for his goal. Thus when Amír al-mu’minín was wounded by `Abd ar-Rahmán ibn Muljam’s fatal attack, he said, “ I was but like the walker who has reached (the goal) or like the seeker who has found (his object) and whatever is with Alláh is good for the pious.” The Prophet also said that there is no pleasure for a believer other than union with Alláh.

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SERMON 6

Delivered on being advised not to chase Talhah ibn `Ubaydilláh and az-Zubayr ibn al-`Awwám for fighting. (1)

By Alláh I shall not be like the badger, which feigns sleep on continuous (sound of) stone-throwing till he who is in search of it finds it or he who is on the look out for it overpowers it. Rather, I shall ever strike the deviators from truth with the help of those who advance towards it, and the sinners and doubters with the help of those who listen to me and obey, till my day (of death) comes. By Alláh I have been continually deprived of my right from the day the Prophet died till today.

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(1). When Amír al-mu'minín showed intention to chase Talhah and az-Zubayr, he was advised to leave them on their own lest he received some harm from them. Amír al-mu'minín uttered these words in reply, the sum total whereof is: "How long can I be a mere spectator to my right being snatched and keep quiet. Now, so long as I have breath of life I shall fight them and make them suffer the consequences of their conduct. They should not think that I can be easily over-powered like the badger."

*Dabu`* means badger. Its nickname is Umm `Amír and Umm Turrayq. It is also called "the glutton", because it swallows everything and eats up whatever it gets as if several bellies were contained in one, and they do not have their fill. It is also called *Na`thal*. It is a very simple and silly animal. Its slyness is apparent from the way it is easily caught. It is said that the hunter surrounds its den and strikes it with his foot or a stick, and calls out softly, "Bow you head Umm Turrayq, conceal yourself Umm `Amír." On repeating this sentence and patting the ground, it conceals itself in a corner of the den. Then the hunter says, "Umm `Amír is not in its den, it is sleeping." On hearing this it stretches its limbs and feigns sleep. The hunter then puts the knot in its feet and drags it out, and if falls like a coward into his hand without resistance.

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SERMON 7

About the hypocrites

They (1) have made Satan the master of their affairs, and he has taken them as partners. He has laid eggs and hatched them in their bosoms. He creeps and crawls in their laps. He sees through their eyes, and speaks with their tongues. In this way he has led them to sinfulness and adorned for them foul things like the action of one whom Satan has made partner in his domain and speaks untruth through his tongue.

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(1). Amír al-mu'minín says about the hypocrites (i.e. those who opposed him before and during his Caliphate) that they are partners in action of Satan and his helpers and supporters. He too has befriended them so much that he has made his abode with them, resides on their bosoms, lays eggs and hatches young one from them there, while these young ones jump and play in their laps without demur. He means that Satanic evil ideas take birth in their bosoms and grow and thrive there. There is no restrain on them, nor restriction of any kind. He has so permeated in their blood and mingled in their spirit that both have become completely unified. Now eyes are theirs but sight is his, the tongue is theirs but the words are his, as the Prophet had said, "Verily, Satan permeates the progeny of Adam like blood." That is, just as the circulation of blood does not stop, in the same way the quick succession of Satan's evil ideas know no break and he draws man towards evil in sleep and wakefulness, and in every posture, rising or sitting. He so paints them with his dye that their word and action reflect an exact portrait of his word and action. Those whose bosoms shine with the effulgence of faith prevent such evil ideas but some are already ready to welcome those evils and these are the persons who under the garb of Islam are ever after advancement of heresy.

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SERMON 8

Said about az-Zubayr at a time for which it was appropriate

He asserts that he swore allegiance to me with his hand but did not swear with his heart. (1) So he does admit allegiance. As regards his claiming it otherwise than with his heart he should come forward with a clear argument for it. Otherwise, he should return to wherefrom he has gone out. (2)

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(1). When after swearing allegiance on the hand of Amír al-mu'minín, az-Zubayr ibn al-`Awwám broke the allegiance, then sometimes he put forth the excuse that he was forced to swear allegiance and that forced allegiance is no allegiance, and sometimes he said that allegiance was only for show. His heart did not go in accord with it. As though he himself admitted with his tongue the duplicity of his outer appearance and inner self. But this excuse is like that of the one who reverts to apostasy after adopting Islam and to avoid penalty may say that he had accepted Islam only by the tongue, not in the heart. Obviously, such an excuse cannot be heard, nor can avoid punishment by this argument. If az-Zubayr suspected that `Uthmán was slain at Amír al-mu'minín's insistence, this suspicion should have existed when he was taking oath for obedience and stretching his hand for allegiance, not now that his expectations were getting frustrated and hopes had started dawning from somewhere else.

(2). Amír al-mu'minín has rejected his claim in short form thus: that when he admits that his hands had paid allegiance then until there is justification for breaking of the allegiance he should stick to it. But if, according to him his heart was not in accord with it he should produce other proof for it. Since proof about the state of heart cannot be adduced how can he bring such proof, and an assertion without proof is unacceptable to his mind.

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SERMON 9

Cowardice of the people of Jamal

They (1) thunder like clouds and shone like lightning but despite both these things they exhibited cowardice, while we do not thunder till we pounce upon the foe nor do we show flow (of words) until we have not virtually rained.

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(1). About the people of Jamal (i.e. the enemy in the battle of Jamal) Amír al-mu'minín says that they rose thundering, shouting and stampeding but when encounter took place they were seen flying like straw. At one time they made loud claims that they would do this and would do that and now they showed such cowardice as to flee from the battle-field. About himself Amír al-mu'minín says, that "We do not threaten the enemy before battle, nor utter boasts, nor terrorise the enemy by raising unnecessary cries because it is not the way of the brave to use the tongue instead of the hand." That is why on this occasion he said to his comrades. "Beware of excessive talk as it is cowardice."

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SERMON 10

About Talhah and az-Zubayr

Beware! Satan (1) has collected his group and assembled his horse-men and foot-soldiers. Surely, with me is my sagacity. I have neither deceived myself nor ever been deceived. By Alláh I shall fill to the brim for them a cistern from which I alone would draw water. They can neither turn away from it nor return to it.

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(1). When Talhah and az-Zubayr broke away by violating the Oath of allegiance and set for Basrah in the company of `Á'ishah, Amír al-mu'minín spoke in these words which are part of the long speech.

Ibn Abi'l-hadíd has written that in this sermon Satan denotes the real Satan as well as Mu`áwiyah because Mu`áwiyah was secretly conspiring with Talhah and az-Zubayr and instigating them to fight against Amír al-mu'minín; but the reference to the real Satan is more appropriate, obvious and in accord with the situation and circumstances.

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SERMON 11

Delivered in the Battle of Jamal when Amír al-mu'minín gave the standard to his son Muhammad ibn al-hanafiyyah (1)

Mountains (2) may move from their position but you should not move from yours. Grit your teeth. Lend to Alláh your head (in fighting for Alláh, give yourself to Alláh). Plant your feet firmly on the ground. Have your eye on the remotest foe and close your eyes (to their numerical majority). And keep sure that succour is but from Alláh, the Glorified.

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(1). Muhammad ibn al-hanafiyyah was Amír al-mu'minín's son but called Ibn Hanafiyyah after his mother. His mother's name was Khawlah bint Ja`far. She was known as Hanafiyyah after her tribe Banú Hanífah. When people of Yamámah were declared apostates for refusing to pay *zakát* (religious tax) and were killed and their women-folk were brought to Medina as slave girls, this lady also came to Medina with them. When her tribesmen came to know it they approached Amír al-mu'minín and requested him to save her from the blemish of slavery and protect her family honour and prestige. Consequently, Amír al-mu'minín set her free after purchasing and married here whereafter Muhammad was born.

Most historians have written his surname as Abu'l-Qásim. Thus, the author of *al-Istí`áb* (vol. 3, pp. 1366, 1367-1368, 1370, 1371-1372) has narrated the opinion of Abú Ráshid ibn Hafs az-Zuhrí that from among the sons of the companions (of the Prophet) he came across four individuals everyone of whom was named Muhammad and surnamed Abu'l-Qásim, namely (I) Muhammad ibn al-hanafiyyah, (2) Muhammad ibn Abú Bakr (3) Muhammad ibn Talhah and (4) Muhammad ibn Sa`d. After this he writes that Muhammad ibn Talhah's name and surname was given by the Prophet. al-Wáqidí writes that the name and surname of Muhammad ibn Abú Bakr was suggested by `Á'ishah. Apparently the Holy Prophet's giving the name of Muhammad ibn Talhah seems incorrect since from some traditions it appears that the Prophet had reserved it for a son of Amír al-mu'minín and he was Muhammad ibn al-hanafiyyah.

> As regards his surname it is said that the Prophet had particularised it and that he had told `Alí that a son would be born to you after me and I have given him my name and surname and after that it is not permissible for anyone in my people to have this name and surname together.

With this opinion before us how can it be correct that the Prophet had given this very name and surname to anyone else since particularisation means that no one else would share it. Moreover, some people have recorded the surname of Ibn Talhah as Abú Sulaymán instead of Abu'l-Qásim and this further confirms our view point. Similarly, if the surname of Muhammad ibn Abú Bakr was on the ground that his son's name was Qásim, who was among the theologians of Medina, then what is the sense in `Á'ishah having suggested it. If she had suggested it along with the name how could Muhammad ibn Abú Bakr tolerate it later on since having been brought up under the care of Amír al-mu'minín the Prophet's saying could not remain concealed from him. Moreover, most people have recorded his surname as Abú `Abd ar-Rahmán, which weakens the view of Abú Ráshid.

Let alone these people's surname being Abu'l-Qásim, even for Ibn al-hanafiyyah this surname is not proved. Although Ibn Khallikán (in *Wafayát al-a`yán,* vol. 4, p.170) has taken that son of Amír al-mu'minín for whom the Prophet had particularised this surname to be Muhammad ibn al-hanafiyyah, yet al-`Allámah al-Mámaqání (in *Tanqíh al-maqál*, vol. 3, Part 1, p. 112) writes:

In applying this tradition to Muhammad ibn al-hanafiyyah, Ibn Khallikán has got into confusion, because the son of Amír al-mu'minín whom the Prophet's name and surname together have been gifted by the Prophet, and which is not permissible to be given to any one else, is to the awaited last Imám (may our lives be his ransom), and not to Muhammad ibn al-hanafiyyah, nor is the surname Abu'l-Qásim established for him, rather some of the Sunnis being ignorant of the real intention of the Prophet, have taken to mean Ibn al-hanafiyyah.

However, Muhammad ibn al-hanafiyyah was prominent in righteousness and piety, sublime in renunciation and worship, lofty in knowledge and achievements and heir of his father in bravery. His performance in the battles of Jamal and Siffín had created such impression among the Arabs that even warriors of consequence trembled at his

name. Amír al-mu’minín too was proud of his courage and valour, and always placed him forward in encounters. ash-Shaykh al-Bahá’í has written in *al-Kashkúl* that `Alí ibn Abí Tálib kept him abreast in the battles and did not allow Hasan and Husayn to go ahead, and used to say, “He is my son while these two are sons of the Prophet of Alláh.” When a Khárijite said to Ibn al-hanafiyyah that `Alí thrust him into the flames of war but saved away Hasan and Husayn he replied that he himself was like the right hand and Hasan and Husayn like `Alí’s two eyes and that `Alí protected his eyes with his right hand. But al-`Allámah al-Mámaqání has written in *Tanqíh al-Maqál* that this was not the reply of Ibn al-hanafiyyah but of Amír al-mu’minín himself. When during the battle of Siffín Muhammad mentioned this matter to Amír al-mu’minín in complaining tone he replied, “You are my right hand whereas they are my eyes, and the hand should protect the eyes.”

Apparently it seems that first Amír al-mu’minín must have given this reply and thereafter someone might have mentioned it to Muhammad ibn al-hanafiyyah and he must have repeated the same reply as there could be no more eloquent reply than this one and its eloquence confirms the view that it was originally the outcome of the eloquent tongue of Amír al-mu’minín and was later appropriated by Muhammad al-hanafiyyah. Consequently, both these views can be held to be correct and there is no incongruity between them. However, he was born in the reign of the second Caliph and died in the reign of `Abd al-Malik ibn Marwán at the age of sixty-five years. Some writers have recorded the year of his death as 80 A.H. and others as 81 A.H. There is a difference about the place of his death as well. Some have put it as Medina, some Aylah and some Tá’if.

(2). When in the Battle of Jamal Amír al-mu’minín sent Muhammad ibn al-hanafiyyah to the battle-field, he told him that he should fix himself before the enemy like the mountain of determination and resoluteness so that the onslaught of the army should not be able to displace him, and should charge the enemy with closed teeth because by pressing teeth over the teeth tension occurs in the nerves of the skull as a result of which the stroke of the sword goes amiss, as he said at another place also *viz*. “Press together the teeth. It sends amiss the edge of the sword.” Then he says, “My child, lend your head to Alláh in order that you may be able to achieve eternal life in place of this one, because for a lent article there is the right to get it back. Therefore, you should fight being heedless of your life, otherwise also if your mind clings to life you will hesitate to advance towards deathly encounters and that would tell upon your reputation of bravery. Look, don’t let your steps falter because the enemy is emboldened at the faltering of steps, and faltering steps fastens the feet of the enemy. Keep the last lines of the enemy as your aim so that the enemy may be overawed with loftiness of your intentions and you may feel ease in tearing through their lives, and their movement should also not remain concealed from you. Look, do not pay heed to their superiority in numbers, otherwise your valour and courage would suffer.” This sentence can also mean that one should not wide open the eyes to be dazzled by the shining of weapons, and the enemy may make an attack by taking advantage of the situation. Also, always bear it in mind that victory is from Alláh. “If Alláh helps you no one can overpower you.” Therefore, instead of relying on material means seek His support and succour.

(Remember O’ ye Believers!) *If Alláh helpeth you, none shall overcome you*...(Qur’án, 3:159)

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SERMON 12

When (1) Alláh gave him (Amír al-mu'minín) victory over the enemy at the Battle of Jamal
one of his comrades said on that occasion, "I wish my brother so-and-so had been present and he too would have seen what success and victory Alláh had given you," whereupon Amír al-mu'minín said:

"Did your brother hold me friend?"
He said: "Yes,"

Then Amír al-mu'minín said:

In that case he was with us. Rather in this army of ours even those persons were also present who are still in the loins of men and wombs of women. Shortly, time will bring them out and faith will get strength through them.

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(1). If a person falls short in his actions despite means and equipment, this would be indicative of the weakness of his will. But if there is an impediment in the way of action or his life comes to an end as a result of which his action remains incomplete, then in that case Alláh would not deprive him of the reward on the basis that actions are judged by intention. Since his intention in any case was to perform the action, therefore he should deserve reward to some extent.

In the case of action, there may be absence of reward because action can involve show or pretence but intention is hidden in the depth of heart. It can have not a jot of show or affectation. The intention would remain at the same level of frankness, truth, perfection and correctness where it is, even though there may be no action due to some impediment. Even if there is no occasion for forming intention but there is passion and zeal in the heart, a man would deserve reward on the basis of his heart's feelings. This is to what Amír al-mu'minín has alluded in this sermon, namely that "If your brother loved me he would share the reward with those who secured martyrdom for our support."

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SERMON 13

Condemning the people of Basrah(1)

You were the army of a woman and in the command of a quadruped. When it grumbled you responded, and when it was wounded (hamstrung) you fled away. Your character is low and your pledge is broken. Your faith is hypocrisy. Your water is brackish. He who stays with you is laden with sins and he who forsakes you secures Alláh's mercy. As though I see your mosque prominent, resembling the surface of a boat, while Alláh has sent chastisement from above and from below it and every one who is on it is drowned.(2)

Another version

By Alláh, your city would certainly be drowned so much so that as though I see its mosque like the upper part of a boat or a sitting ostrich.

Another version

Like the bosom of a bird in deep sea.

Another version

Your city is the most stinking of all the cities as regards its clay, the nearest to water and remotest from the sky. It contains nine tenths of evil. He who enters it is surrounded with his sins and he who is out of it enjoys Alláh's forgiveness. It seems as though I look at this habitation of yours that water has so engulfed it that nothing can be seen of it except the highest part of mosque appearing like the bosom of a bird in deep sea.

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(1). Ibn Maytham writes that when the Battle of Jamal ended then on the third day after it Amír al-mu'minín said the morning prayer in the central mosque of Basrah and after finishing it stood on the right side of the prayer place reclining against the wall and delivered this sermon wherein he described the lowness of character of the people of Basrah and their slyness, namely that they got enflamed at others' instigation without anything of their own and making over their command to a woman clung to a camel. They broke away after swearing allegiance and exhibited their low character and evil nature by practising double facedness. In this sermon woman implies \`Á'ishah and quadruped implies the camel (Jamal) after which this battle has been named the "Battle of Jamal."

This battle originated in this way that when although during the life time of \`Uthmán, \`Á'ishah used to oppose him and had left for Mecca leaving him in siege and as such she had a share in his assassination details of which would be stated at some suitable place but when on her return from Mecca towards Medina she heard from \`Abdulláh ibn Salamah that after \`Uthmán allegiance had been paid to \`Alí (as Caliph) she suddenly exclaimed, "If allegiance has been paid to \`Alí, I wish the sky had burst on the earth. Let me go back to Mecca." Consequently she decided to return to Mecca and began saying, "By Alláh \`Uthmán has been killed helplessly. I shall certainly avenge his blood." On seeing this wide change in the state of affairs Abú Salamah said, "What are you saying as you yourself used to say "Kill this *Na\`thal* ; he had turned unbeliever." Thereupon she replied, "Not only I but everyone used to say so; but leave these things and listen to what I am now saying, that is better and deserves more attention. It is so strange that first he was called upon to repent but before giving him an opportunity to do so he has been killed." On this Abú Salamah recited the following verses addressing her:

You started it and now you are changing and raising storms of wind and rain.
You ordered for his killing and told us that he had turned unbeliever.
We admit that he has been killed but under your orders and the real Killer is one who ordered it.
Nevertheless, neither the sky fell over us nor did the sun and moon fall into eclipse.
Certainly people have paid allegiance to one who can ward off the enemy with power and grandeur, does not allow swords to come near him and loosens the twist of the rope, that is, subdues the enemy.
He is always fully armed for combat and the faithful is never like the traitor.

However, when she reached Mecca with a passion for vengeance she began rousing the people to avenge `Uthmán's blood by circulating stories of his having been victimised. The first to respond to this call was `Abdulláh ibn `Ámir al-hadramí who had been the governor of Mecca in `Uthmán's reign and with him Marwán ibn al-Hakam, Sa`íd ibn al-`ÁS and other Umayyads rose to support her. On the other side Talhah ibn `Ubaydilláh and az-Zubayr ibn al-`Awwám also reached Mecca from Medina. From Yemen Ya`lá ibn Munabbih who had been governor there during `Uthmán's caliphate and the former governor of Basrah, `Abdulláh ibn `Amír ibn Kurayz also reached there, and joining together began preparing their plans. Battle had been decided upon but discussion was about the venue of confrontation. `Á'ishah's opinion was to make Medina the venue of the battle but some people opposed and held that it was difficult to deal with Medinites, and that some other place should be chosen as the venue. At last after much discussion it was decided to march towards Basrah as there was no dearth of men to support the cause. Consequently on the strength of `Abdulláh ibn `Ámir's countless wealth, and the offer of six hundred thousand Dirhams and six hundred camels by Ya`lá ibn Munabbih they prepared an army of three thousand and set off to Basrah. There was a small incident on the way on account of which `Á'ishah refused to advance further. What happened was that at a place she heard the barking of dogs and enquired from the camel driver the name of the place. He said it was Haw'ab. On hearing this name she recalled the Prophet's admonition when he had said to his wives, "I wish I could know at which of you the dogs of Haw'ab would bark." So when she realised that she herself was that one she got the camel seated by patting and expressed her intention to abandon the march. But the device of her companions saved the deteriorating situation. `Abdulláh ibn az-Zubayr swore to assure her that it was not Haw'ab, Talhah seconded him and for her further assurance also sent for fifty persons to stand witness to it. When all the people were on one side what could a single woman do by opposing. Eventually they were successful and `Á'ishah resumed her forward march with the same enthusiasm.

When this army reached Basrah, people were first amazed to see the riding animal of `Á'ishah. Járiyah ibn Qudámah came forward and said, "O' mother of the faithful, the assassination of `Uthmán was one tragedy but the greater tragedy is that you have come out on this cursed camel and ruined your honour and esteem. It is better that you should get back." But since neither the incident at Haw'ab could deter her nor could the Qur'ánic injunction*: "Keep sitting in your houses"* (33:33) stop her, what effect could these voices produce. Consequently, she disregarded all this.

When this army tried to enter the city the Governor of Basrah `Uthmán ibn Hunayf came forward to stop them and when the two parties came face to face they drew their swords out of the sheaths and pounced upon each other. When a good number had been killed from either side `Á'ishah intervened on the basis of her influence and the two groups agreed that till the arrival of Amír al-mu'minín the existing administration should continue and `Uthmán ibn Hunayf should continue on his post. But only two days had elapsed when they made a nightly attack on `Uthmán ibn Hunayf, killed forty innocent persons, beat `Uthmán ibn Hunayf, plucked every hair of his beard, took him in their custody and shut him up. Then they attacked public treasury and while ransacking it killed twenty persons on the spot, and beheaded fifty more after arresting them. Then they attacked the grain store, whereupon an elderly noble of Basrah Hukaym ibn Jabalah could not control himself and reaching there with his men said to `Abdulláh ibn az-Zubayr, "Spare some of this grain for the city's populace. After all there should be a limit to oppression. You have spread killing and destruction all round and put `Uthmán ibn Hunayf in confinement. For Alláh's sake keep off these ruining activities and release `Uthmán ibn Hunayf. Is there no fear of Alláh in your hearts?" Ibn az-Zubayr said, "This is vengeance of `Uthmán's life." Hukaym ibn Jabalah retorted, "Were those who have been killed assassins of `Uthmán? By Alláh, if I had supporters and comrades I should have certainly avenged the blood of these Muslims whom you have killed without reason." Ibn az-Zubayr replied, "We shall not give anything out of this grain, nor will `Uthmán ibn Hunayf be released." At last the battle raged between these two parties but how could a few individuals deal with such a big force? The result was that Hukaym ibn Jabalah, his son al-Ashraf ibn Hukaym ibn Jabalah, his brother ar-Ri'l ibn Jabalah and seventy persons of his tribe were killed. In short, killing and looting prevailed all round. Neither anyone's life was secure nor was there any way to save one's honour or property.

When Amír al-mu'minín was informed of the march to Basrah he set out to stop it with a force which consisted of seventy of those who had taken part in the battle of Badr and four hundred out of those companions who had the honour of being present at the Allegiance of Ridwán (Divine Pleasure). When he stopped at the stage of *Dhíqár* he sent his son Hasan (p.b.u.h.) and `Ammár ibn Yásir to Kúfah to invite its people to fighting. Consequently, despite interference of Abú Músá al-Ash`ari seven thousand combatants from there joined Amír al- mu'minín's army. He left that place after placing the army under various commanders. Eye witnesses state that when this force reached near Basrah first of all a contingent of *ansár* appeared foremost. Its standard was held by Abú Ayyúb al-Ansárí. After it appeared another contingent of 1000 whose commander was Khuzaymah ibn Thábit al-Ansárí. Then another contingent came in sight. Its standard was borne by Abú Qatádah ibn ar-Rabí`. Then a crowd of a thousand old and young persons was seen. They had signs of prostration on their foreheads and veil of fear of Alláh on their face. It seemed as if they were standing before the Divine Glory on the Day of Judgement. Their Commander rode a dark horse,

was dressed in white, had black turban on his head and was reciting the Qur’án loudly. This was `Ammár ibn Yásir. Then another contingent appeared. Its standard was in the hand of Qays ibn Sa`d ibn `Ubádah. Then an army came to sight. Its leader wore white dress and had a black turban on his head. He was so handsome that all eyes centred around him. This was `Abdulláh ibn `Abbás. Then followed a contingent of the companions of the Prophet. Their standard bearer was Qutham ibn al-`Abbás. Then after the passing of a few contingents a big crowd was seen, wherein there was such a large number of spears that they were overlapping and flags of numerous colours were flying. Among them a big and lofty standard was seen with distinctive position. Behind it was seen a rider guarded by sublimity and greatness. His sinews were well-developed and eyes were cast downwards. His awe and dignity was such that no one could look at him. This was the Ever Victorious Lion of Alláh namely `Alí ibn Abí Tálib (p.b.u.h.). On his right and left were Hasan and Husayn (p.b.u.t.). In front of him Muhammad ibn al-hanafiyyah walked in slow steps carrying the banner of victory and glory, and on the back were the young men of Banú Háshim, the people of Badr and `Abdulláh ibn Ja`far ibn Abí Tálib. When this army reached the place az-Záwiyah, Amír al-mu’minín alighted from the horse, and after performing four *rak`ah* of prayer put his cheeks on the ground. When he lifted his head the ground was drenched with tears and the tongue was uttering these words:

> *O’ Sustainer of earth, heaven and the high firmament, this is Basrah. Fill our lap with its good and protect us from its evils.*

Then proceeding forward he got down in the battle-field of Jamal where the enemy was already camping. First of all Amír al-mu’minín announced in his army that no one should attack another, nor take the initiative. Saying this he came in front of the opposite army and said to Talhah and az-Zubayr, “You ask `Á’ishah by swearing in the name of Alláh and His prophet whether I am not free from the blame of `Uthmán’s blood, and whether I used the same words for him which you used to say, and whether I pressurised you for allegiance or you swore it of your own free will.“ Talhah got exasperated at these words but az-Zubayr relented, and Amír al-mu’minín turned back after it, and giving the Qur’án to Muslim (a young man from the tribe of `Abd Qays) sent him towards them to pronounce to them the verdict of the Qur’án. But people took both of them within aim and covered this godly man with their arrows. Then `Ammár ibn Yásir went to canvass and convince them and caution them with the consequences of war but his words were also replied by arrows. Till now Amír al-mu’minín had not allowed an attack as a result of which the enemy continued feeling encouraged and went on raining arrows constantly. At last with the dying of a few valiant combatants consternation was created among Amír al-mu’minín’s ranks and some people came with a few bodies before him and said, “O’ Commander of the faithful you are not allowing us to fight while they are covering us with arrows. How long can we let them make our bosoms the victim of their arrows, and remain handfolded at their excesses?” At this Amír al-mu’minín did show anger but acting with restraint and endurance, came to the enemy in that very form without wearing armour or any arm and shouted, “Where is az-Zubayr?” At first az-Zubayr hesitated to come forward but he noticed that Amír al-mu’minín had no arms he came out. Amír al-mu’minín said to him “O’ az-Zubayr, you must remember that one day the Prophet told you that you would fight with me and wrong and excess would be on your side.” az-Zubayr replied that he had said so. Then Amír al-mu’minín enquired “Why have you come then?” He replied that his memory had missed it and if he had recollected it earlier he would not have come that way. Amír al-mu’minín said, “Well, now you have recollected it” and he replied, “Yes.” Saying this he went straight to `Á’ishah and told her that he was getting back. She asked him the reason and he replied, “`Alí has reminded me a forgotten matter. I had gone astray, but now I have come on the right path and would not fight `Alí ibn Abí Tálib at any cost.” `Á’ishah said, “You have caught fear of the swords of the sons of `Abd al-Muttalib.” He said, “No” and saying this he turned the reins of his horse. However, it is gratifying that some consideration was accorded to the Prophet’s saying, for at Haw’ab even after recollection of the Prophet’s words no more than transient effect was taken of it. On returning after this conversation Amír al-mu’minín observed that they had attacked the right and left flanks of his army. Noticing this Amír al-mu’minín said, “Now the plea has been exhausted. Call my son Muhammad.” When he came Amír al-mu’minín said, “My son, attack them now.” Muhammad bowed his head and taking the standard proceeded to the battle-field. But arrows were falling in such exuberance that he had to stop. When Amír al-mu’minín saw this he called out at him, “Muhammad, why don’t you advance?” He said, “Father, in this shower of arrows there is no way to proceed. Wait till the violence of arrows subsides.” He said, “No, thrust yourself in the arrows and spears and attack.” Muhammad ibn al-hanafiyyah advanced a little but the archers so surrounded him that he had to hold his steps. On seeing this a frown appeared on Amír al-mu’minín’s fore-head and getting forward he hit the sword’s handle on the Muhammad’s back and said, “This is the effect of your mother’s veins.” Saying this he took the standard from his hands and folding up his sleeves made such and attack that a tumult was created in the enemy’s ranks from one end to the other. To whichever row he turned, it became clear and to whatever side he directed himself bodies were seen falling and heads rolling in the hoofs of horses. When after convulsing the rows he returned to his position he said to Muhammad ibn al-hanafiyyah, “Look, my son, battle is fought like this.” Saying this he gave the standard to him and ordered him to proceed. Muhammad advanced towards the enemy with a contingent of *ansár*. The enemy also came out moving and balancing their spears.

But the brave son of the valiant father convulsed rows over rows while the other warriors also made the battle-field glory and left heaps of dead bodies.

From the other side also there was full demonstration of spirit of sacrifice. Dead bodies were falling one over the other but they continued sacrificing their lives devotedly around the camel. Particularly the condition of Banú Dabbah was that although their hands were being severed from the elbows for holding the reins of the camel, and bosoms were being pierced yet they had the following battle-song on their tongues:

a) To us death is sweeter than honey. We are Banú Dabbah, camel rearers.

b) We are sons of death when death comes. We announce the death of `Uthmán with the edges of spears.

c) Give us back our chief and there is an end to it.

The low character and ignorance from faith of these Banú Dabbah, can be well understood by that one incident which al-Madá'iní has narrated. He writes that in Basrah there was a man with mutilated ear. He asked him its reason when he said, "I was watching the sight of dead bodies in the battle-field of Jamal when I saw a wounded man who sometimes raised his head and sometimes dashed it back on the ground. I approached near. Then the following two verses were on his lips:

a) Our mother pushed us into the deep waters of death and did not get back till we had thoroughly drunk.

b) By misfortune we obeyed Banú Taym who are none but slave men and slave girls.

"I told him it was not the time to recite verses; he should rather recall Alláh and recite the *kalimat ash-shahádah* (verse of testimony). On my saying this he saw me with angry looks and uttering a severe abuse and said, "You are asking me to recite *kalimat ash-shahádah*, get frightened at the last moment and show impatience." I was astonished to hear this and decided to return without saying anything further. When he saw me returning he said, "Wait; for your sake I am prepared to recite, but teach me." I drew close to teach him the *kalimah* when he asked me to get closer. When I got closer he caught my ear with his teeth and did not leave it till he tore it from the root. I did not think it proper to molest a dying man and was about to get back abusing and cursing him when he asked me to listen one more thing. I agreed to listen lest he had an unsatisfied wish. He said that when I should get to my mother and she enquired who had bitten my ear I should say that it was done by `Umayr ibn al-Ahlab ad-¬abbí who had been deceived by a woman aspiring to become the commander of the faithful (head of the state)."

However, when the dazzling lightning of swords finished the lives of thousands of persons and hundreds of Banú Azd and Banú Dabbah were killed for holding the rein of the camel, Amír al-mu'minín ordered, "Kill the camel for it is Satan." Saying this he made such a severe attack that the cries of "Peace" and "Protection" rose from all round. When he reached near the camel he ordered Bujayr ibn Duljah to kill the camel at once. Consequently, Bujayr hit him with such full might that the camel fell in agony on the side of its bosom. No sooner than the camel fell the opposite army took to heels and the carrier holding `Á'ishah was left lonely and unguarded. The companion of Amír al-mu'minín took control of the carrier and under orders of Amír al-mu'minín, Muhammad ibn Abí Bakr escorted `Á'ishah to the house of Safiyyah bint al-hárith.

This encounter commenced on the 10th of Jumádá ath-thániyah, 36 A.H., in the afternoon and came to an end the same evening. In it from Amír al-mu'minín's army of twenty two thousand, one thousand and seventy or according to another version five hundred persons were killed as martyrs while from `Á'ishah's army of thirty thousand, seventeen thousand persons were killed, and the Prophet's saying, "That people who assigned their affairs (of state) to a woman would never prosper" was fully corroborated. (*al-Imámah wa's-siyásah; Murúj adh-dhahab; al-`Iqd al-faríd; at-Tárikh*, at Tabarí)

(2). Ibn Abi'l-hadíd has written that as prophesied by Amír al-mu'minín, Basrah got under floods twice - once in the days of al-Qádir Billáh and once in the reign of al-Qá'im bí Amri'l-láh and the state of flooding was just this that while the whole city was under water but the top ends of the mosque were seen about the surface of the water and looked like a bird sitting on the side of its bosom.

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SERMON 14

This also is in condemnation of the people of Basrah

Your earth is close to the sea and away from the sky. Your wits have become light and your minds are full of folly. You are the aim of the archer, a morsel for the eater and an easy prey for the hunter.

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SERMON 15

After resuming the land grants made by `Uthmán ibn `Affán, he said:

By Alláh, even if I had found that by such money women have been married or slave-maids have been purchased I would have resumed it because there is wide scope in dispensation of justice, and he who finds it hard to act justly should find it harder to deal with injustice.

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SERMON 16

Delivered when allegiance was sworn to him at Medina

The responsibility for what I say is guaranteed and I am answerable for it. He to whom experiences have clearly shown the past exemplary punishments (given by Alláh to peoples) is prevented by piety from falling into doubts. You should know that the same troubles have returned to you which existed when the Prophet was first sent.

By Alláh who sent the Prophet with faith and truth you will be severely subverted, bitterly shaken as in sieving and fully mixed as by spooning in a cooking pot till your low persons become high and high ones become low, those who were behind would attain forward positions and those who were forward would become backward. By Alláh, I have not concealed a single word or spoken any lie and I had been informed of this event and of this time.

Beware that sins are like unruly horses on whom their riders have been placed and their reins have been let loose so that they would jump with them in Hell. Beware that piety is like trained horses on whom the riders have been placed with the reins in their hands, so that they would take the riders to Heaven. There is right and wrong and there are followers for each. If wrong dominates, it has (always) in the past been so, and if truth goes down that too has often occurred. It seldom happens that a thing that lags behind comes forward.

ash-Sharíf ar-Radí says: In this small speech there is more beauty than can be appreciated, and the quantity of amazement aroused by it is more than the appreciation accorded to it. Despite what we have stated it has so many aspects of eloquence that cannot be expressed nor can anyone reach its depth, and no one can understand what I am saying unless one has attained this art and known its details.

. . . No one appreciates it except those who know (Qur'án, 29:43)

From the same Sermon

He who has heaven and hell in his view has no other aim. He who attempts and acts quickly, succeeds, while the seeker who is slow may also entertain hope, and he who falls short of action faces destruction in Hell. On right and left there are misleading paths. Only the middle way is the (right) path which is the Everlasting Book and the traditions of the Prophet. From it the *sunnah* has spread out and towards it is the eventual return.

He who claims (otherwise) is ruined and he who concocts falsehood is disappointed. He who opposes(1) right with his face gets destruction. It is enough ignorance for a man not to know himself. He who is strong rooted(2) in piety does not get destruction, and the plantation of a people based on piety never remains without water. Hide yourselves in your houses and reform yourselves. Repentance is at your back. One should praise only Alláh and condemn only his own self.

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(1). In some versions after the words *"man abdá Safhatahu lilhaqqi halaka"* the words *"`inda jahálati'n-nás"* also occur. In that case the meaning of this sentence would be that he who stands in face of right dies in the estimation of the ignorant.

(2). Piety is the name of heart and mind being affected and impressed by the Divine Greatness and Glory, as an effect of which the spirit of man becomes full of fear of Alláh, and its inevitable result is that engrossment in worship and prayer increases. It is impossible that heart may be full of Divine fear and there be no manifestation of it in actions and deeds. And since worship and submission reform the heart and nurture the spirit, purity of heart increases with the increase of worship. That is why in the Qur'án *"taqwá"* (piety) has been applied sometimes to fear, sometimes to worship and devotion and sometimes to purity of heart and spirit. Thus in the verse *"wa iyyáyá fattaqún"* (and Me you fear [16:2]) *taqwá* implies fear, in the verse, *"ittaqú'l-láha haqqa tuqátihi"* (worship Alláh as He ought to be worshipped [3:102]), *taqwá* implies worship and devotion and in the *verse "wa yakhsha'l-láha wa yattaqhi fauláika humu'l-fáizún"* (24:52) *taqwá* implies purity of spirit and cleanliness of heart.

In the traditions *taqwá* has been assigned three degrees. The first degree is that a man should follow the injunctions and keep aloof from prohibitions. The second degree is that recommended matters should also be followed

and disliked things should be avoided. The third degree is that for fear of falling into doubts one may abstain from the permissible as well. The first degree is for the common men, the second for the nobles and the third for high dignitaries. Alláh has referred to these three degrees in the following verse:

> *On those who believe and do good, is no blame for what they ate,* (before) *when they did guard themselves and did believe, and did good, still* (furthermore) *they guard themselves and do good; and Alláh loveth the doers of good.* (Qur'án, 5:93)

Amír al-mu'minín says that only action based on piety is lasting, and only that action will blossom and bear fruit which is watered by piety because worship is only that wherein the feeling of submission exists. Thus, Alláh says:

> *Is he therefore better who hath laid his foundation on fear of Alláh and* (His) *goodwill or he who layeth his foundation on the brink of a crumbling hollowed bank so it crumbled down with him into the fire of Hell...* (Qur'án, 9:109)

Consequently, every such belief as is not based on knowledge and conviction is like the edifice, erected without foundation, wherein there is no stability or firmness while every action that is without piety is like the plantation which withers for lack of watering.

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SERMON 17

About those who sit for dispensation of justice among people but are not fit for it.

Among(1) all the people the most detested before Alláh are two persons. One is he who is devoted to his self. So he is deviated from the true path and loves speaking about (foul) innovations and inviting towards wrong path. He is therefore a nuisance for those who are enamoured of him, is himself misled from the guidance of those preceding him, misleads those who follow him in his life or after his death, carries the weight of others' sins and is entangled in his own misdeeds.

The other man is he who has picked up ignorance. He moves among the ignorant, is senseless in the thick of mischief and is blind to the advantages of peace. Those resembling like men have named him scholar but he is not so. He goes out early morning to collect things whose deficiency is better than plenty, till when he has quenched his thirst from polluted water and acquired meaningless things.

He sits among the people as a judge responsible for solving whatever is confusing to the others. If an ambiguous problem is presented before him he manages shabby argument about it of his own accord and passes judgement on its basis. In this way he is entangled in the confusion of doubts as in the spider's web, not knowing whether he was right or wrong. If he is right he fears lest he erred, while if he is wrong he hopes he is right. He is ignorant, wandering astray in ignorance and riding on carriages aimlessly moving in darkness. He did not try to find reality of knowledge. He scatters the traditions as the wind scatters the dry leaves.

By Alláh, he is not capable of solving the problems that come to him nor is fit for the position assigned to him. Whatever he does not know he does not regard it worth knowing. He does not realise that what is beyond his reach is within the reach of others. If anything is not clear to him he keeps quiet over it because he knows his own ignorance. Lost lives are crying against his unjust verdicts, and properties (that have been wrongly disposed of) are grumbling against him.

I complain to Alláh about persons who live ignorant and die misguided. For them nothing is more worthless than Qur'án if it is recited as it should be recited, nor anything more valuable than the Qur'án if its verses are removed from their places, nor anything more vicious than virtue nor more virtuous than vice.

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(1). Amír al-mu'minín has held two categories of persons as the most detestable by Alláh and the worst among people. Firstly, those who are misguided even in basic tenets and are busy in the spreading of evil. Secondly, those who abandon the Qur'án and *sunnah* and pronounce injunctions through their imagination. They create a circle of their devotees and popularise the religious code of law concocted by themselves. The misguidance and wrongfulness of such persons does not remain confined to their own selves but the seed of misguidance sown by them bears fruit and growing into the form of a big tree provides asylum to the misguided and this misguidance goes on multiplying. And since these very people are the real originators the weight of other's sins is also on their shoulders as the Qur'án says:

And certainly they shall bear their own burdens, and (other) *burdens with their own burdens...* (29:13)

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SERMON 18

Amír al-mu'minín said in disparagement of the differences of view among the theologians.

When (1) a problem is put before anyone of them he passes judgement on it from his imagination. When exactly the same problem is placed before another of them he passes an opposite verdict. Then these judges go to the chief who had appointed them and he confirms all the verdicts, although their Alláh is One (and the same), their Prophet is one (and the same), their Book (the Qur'án) is one (and the same).

Is it that Alláh ordered them to differ and they obeyed Him? Or He prohibited them from it but they disobeyed Him? Or (is it that) Alláh sent an incomplete Faith and sought their help to complete it? Or they are His partners in the affairs, so that it is their share of duty to pronounce and He has to agree? Or is it that Alláh the Glorified sent a perfect faith but the Prophet fell short of conveying it and handing it over (to the people)? The fact is that Alláh the Glorified says:

. . . We have not neglected anything in the Book (Qur'án) . . . (Qur'án, 6:38)

And says that one part of the Qur'án verifies another part and that there is no divergence in it as He says:

. . . And if it had been from any other than Alláh, they would surely have found in it much discrepancy. (Qur'án, 4 :82)

Certainly the outside of the Qur'án is wonderful and its inside is deep (in meaning). Its wonders will never disappear, its amazements will never pass away and its intricacies cannot be cleared except through itself.

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(1). It is a disputed problem that where there is no clear argument about a matter in the religious law, whether there does in reality exist an order about it or not. The view adopted by Abu'l-Hasan al-Ash`arí and his master Abú `Alí al-Jubbá'í is that in such a case Alláh has not ordained any particular course of action but He assigned the task of finding it out and passing a verdict to the jurists so that whatever they hold as prohibited would be deemed prohibited and whatever they regard permissible would be deemed permissible. And if one has one view and the other another then as many verdicts will exist as there are views and each of them would represent the final order. For example, if one scholar holds that barley malt is prohibited and another jurist's view is that it is permissible then it would really be both prohibited and permissible. That is, for one who holds it prohibited, its use would be prohibited while for the other its use would be permissible. About this (theory of) correctness Muhammad ibn Abdi'l-Karím ash-Shahrastání writes:

> A group of theorists hold that in matters where *ijtihád* (research) is applied there is no settled view about permissibility or otherwise and lawfulness and prohibition thereof, but whatever the *mujtahid* (the researcher scholar) holds is the order of Alláh, because the ascertainment of the view of Alláh depends upon the verdict of the *mujtahid.* If it is not so there will be no verdict at all. And according to this view every *mujtahid* would be correct in his opinion. (*al-Milal wa'l-nihal,* p.98)

In this case, the *mujtahid* is taken to be above mistake because a mistake can be deemed to occur where a step is taken against reality, but where there is no reality of verdict, mistake has no sense. Besides this, the *mujtahid* can be considered to be above mistake if it is held that Alláh, being aware of all the views that were likely to be adopted has ordained as many final orders as a result of which every view corresponds to some such order, or that Alláh has assured that the views adopted by the *mujtahids* should not go beyond what He has ordained, or that by chance the view of every one of them would, after all, correspond to some ordained order or other.

The Imámiyyah sect, however, has different theory, namely that Alláh has neither assigned to anyone the right to legislate nor subjected any matter to the view of the *mujtahid,* nor in case of difference of views has He ordained numerous real orders. Of course, if the *mujtahid* cannot arrive at a real order then whatever view he takes after research and probe, it is enough for him and his followers to act by it. Such an order is the apparent order which is a substitute for the real order. In this case, he is excused for missing the real order, because he did his best for diving in the deep ocean and to explore its bottom, but it is a pity that instead of pearls he got only the sea-shell. He does not

say that observers should except it as a pearl or it should sell as such. It is a different matter that Alláh who watches the endeavours may price it at half so that the endeavour does not go waste, nor his passion discouraged.

If the theory of correctness is adopted then every verdict on law and every opinion shall have to be accepted as correct as Maybudhí has written in *Fawátih:*

In this matter the view adopted by al-Ash`arí is right. It follows that differing opinions should all be right. Beware, do not bear a bad idea about jurists and do not open your tongue to abuse them.

When contrary theories and divergent views are accepted as correct it is strange why the action of some conspicuous individuals are explained as mistakes of decision, since mistake of decision by the *mujtahid* cannot be imagined at all. If the theory of correctness is right the action of Mu`áwiyah and `Á'ishah should be deemed right; but if their actions can be deemed to be wrong then we should agree that *ijtihád* can also go wrong, and that the theory of correctness is wrong. It will then remain to be decided in its own context whether feminism did not impede the decision of `Á'ishah or whether it was a (wrong) finding of Mu`áwiyah or something else. However, this theory of correctness was propounded in order to cover mistakes and to give them the garb of Alláh's orders so that there should be no impediment in achieving objectives nor should anyone be able to speak against any misdeeds.

In this sermon Amír al-mu'minín has referred to those people who deviate from the path of Alláh and, closing their eyes to light, grope in the darkness of imagination, make Faith the victim of their views and opinions, pronounce new findings, pass orders by their own imagination and produce divergent results. Then on the basis of the theory of correctness they regard all these divergent and contrary orders as from Alláh, as though each of their order represents divine Revelation so that no order of theirs can be wrong nor can they stumble on any occasion. Thus, Amír al-mu'minín says in disproving this view that:

1) When Alláh is One, Book (Qur'án) is one, and Prophet is one then the religion (that is followed) should also be one. And when the religion is one how can there be divergent orders about any matter, because there can be divergence in an order only in case he who passed the order has forgotten it, or is oblivious, or senselessness overtakes him, or he wilfully desires entanglement in these labyrinths, while Alláh and the Prophet are above these things. These divergences cannot therefore be attributed to them. These divergences are rather the outcome of the thinkings and opinions of people who are bent on twisting the delineations of religion by their own imaginative performances.

2) Alláh must have either forbidden these divergences or ordered creating them. If He has ordered in their favour, where is that order and at what place? As for forbidding, the Qur'án says:

. . .Say thou! 'Hath Alláh permitted you or ye forge a lie against Alláh?' (10:59)

That is, everything that is not in accordance with the Divine orders is a concoction, and concoction is forbidden and prohibited. For concocters, in the next world, there is neither success or achievement nor prosperity and good. Thus, Alláh says:

And utter ye not whatever lie describe your tongues (saying): This is lawful and this is forbidden, to forge a lie against Alláh; verily, those who forge a lie against Alláh succeed not. (Qur'án, 16:116)

3) If Alláh has left religion incomplete and the reason for leaving it halfway was that He desired that the people should assist Him in completing the religious code and share with Him in the task of legislating, then this belief is obviously polytheism. If He sent down the religion in complete form the Prophet must have failed in conveying it so that room was left for others to apply imagination and opinion. This, Alláh forbid, would mean a weakness of the Prophet and a bad slur on the selection of Alláh.

4) Alláh has said in the Qur'án that He has not left out anything in the Book and has clarified each and every matter. Now, if an order is carved out in conflict with the Qur'án it would be outside the religious code and its basis would not be on knowledge and perception, or Qur'án and *sunnah,* but it would be personal opinion and one's personal judgement which cannot be deemed to have accord with religion and faith.

5) Qur'án is the basis and source of religion and the fountain head of the laws of *sharí`ah.* If the laws of *sharí`ah* were divergent there should have been divergence in it also, and if there were divergences in it, it

could not be regarded as Divine word. When it is Divine word the laws of *shari`ah* cannot be divergent, so as to accept all divergent and contrary views as correct and imaginative verdicts taken as Qur'ánic dictates.

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SERMON 19

Amír al-mu'minín was delivering a lecture from the pulpit of (the mosque of) Kúfah

when al-Ash`ath ibn Qays (1) **objected and said, "O' Amír al-mu'minín this thing is not in your favour but against you."** (2) **Amír al-mu'minín looked at him with anger and said:**

How do you know what is for me and what is against me? ! Curse of Alláh and others be on you. You are a weaver and son of a weaver. You are the son of an unbeliever and yourself a hypocrite. You were arrested once by the Unbelievers and once by the Muslims, but your wealth and birth could not save you from either. The man who contrives for his own people to be put to sword and invites death and destruction for them does deserve that the near ones should hate him and the remote ones should not trust him.

as-Sayyid ar-Radí says: This man was arrested once when an unbeliever and once in days of Islam. As for Amír al-mu'minín's words that the man contrived for his own people to be put to sword, the reference herein is to the incident which occurred to al-Ash`ath ibn Qays in confrontation with Khálid ibn Walíd at Yamámah, where he deceived his people and contrived a trick till Khálid attacked them. After this incident his people nicknamed him "`Urf an-Nár" which in the parlance stood for traitor.

AL-ASH`ATH IBN QAYS AL-KINDÍ

(1). His original name was Ma`dí Karib and surname Abú Muhammad but because of his dishevelled hair he is better known as al-Ash`ath (one having dishevelled hair). When after Proclamation (of Prophethood) he came to Mecca along with his tribe, the Prophet invited him and his tribe to accept Islam. But all of them turned back without anyone accepting Islam. When after *hijrah* (immigration of the Holy Prophet) Islam became established and in full swing and deputations began to come to Medina in large numbers he also came to the Prophet's audience with Banú Kindah and accepted Islam. The author of *al-`Istí`áb* writes that after the Prophet this man again turned unbeliever but when during the Caliphate of Abú Bakr he was brought to Medina as prisoner he again accepted Islam, though this time too his Islam was a show. Thus, ash-Shaykh Muhammad `Abduh writes in his annotations on *Nahj al-balághah:*

> Just as `Abdulláh ibn Ubay ibn Salúl was a companion of the Prophet, al-Ash`ath was a companion of `Alí and both were high ranking hypocrites.

He lost one of his eyes in the battle of Yarmúk. Ibn Qutaybah has included him in the list of the one-eyed. Abú Bakr's sister Umm Farwah bint Abí Quháfah, who was once the wife of an al-Azdí and then of Tamím ad-Dárimí, was on the third occasion married to this al-Ash`ath. Three sons were born of her *viz.* Muhammad, Ismá`íl and Is'háq. Books on biography show that she was blind. Ibn Abi'l-hadíd has quoted the following statement of Abu'l-Faraj wherefrom it appears that this man was equally involved in the assassination of `Alí (p.b.u.h.):

> On the night of the assassination Ibn Muljam came to al-Ash`ath ibn Qays and both retired to a corner of the mosque and sat there when Hujr ibn `Adí passed by that side and he heard al-Ash`ath saying to Ibn Muljam, "Be quick now or else dawn's light would disgrace you." On hearing this Hujr said to al-Ash`ath, "O' one-eyed man, you are preparing to kill 'Alí" and hastened towards `Alí ibn Abí Tálib, but Ibn Muljam had preceded him and struck 'Alí with sword when Hujr turned back people were crying, "Alí has been killed."

It was his daughter who killed Imám Hasan (p.b.u.h.) by poisoning him. Mas`údí has written that:

> His (Hasan's) wife Ja`dah bint al-Ash`ath poisoned him while Mu`áwiyah had conspired with her that if she could contrive to poison Hasan he would pay her one hundred thousand Dirhams and marry her to Yazíd. (*Murúj adh-dhahab*, vol. 2, p. 650)

His son Muhammad ibn al-Ash`ath was active in playing fraud with Ha_rat Muslim ibn `Aqíl in Kúfah and in shedding Imám Husayn's blood in Karbalá'. But despite all these points he is among those from whom al-Bukhárí, Muslim, Abú Dáwúd, at-Tirmidhí, an-Nasá'í and Ibn Májah have related traditions.

(2). After the battle of Nahrawán, Amír al-mu'minín was delivering a sermon in the mosque of Kúfah about ill effects of "Arbitration" when a man stood up and said "O' Amír al-mu'minín, first you desisted us from this Arbitration but thereafter you allowed it. We cannot understand which of these two was more correct and proper." On hearing this Amír al-mu'minín clapped his one hand over the other and said, " This is the reward of one who gives up firm view" that is, this is the outcome of your actions as you had abandoned firmness and caution and insisted on "Arbitration," but al-Ash`ath mistook it to mean as though Amír al mu'minín implied that "my worry was due to having accepted Arbitration," so he spoke out, "O' Amír al-mu'minín this brings blame on your own self" whereupon Amír al-mu'minín said harshly:

> What do you know what I am saying, and what do you understand what is for me or against me. You are a weaver and the son of a weaver brought up by unbelievers and a hypocrite. Curse of Alláh and all the world be upon you.

Commentators have written several reasons for Amír al-mu'minín calling Ash`ath a weaver. First reason is, because he and his father like most of the people of his native place pursued the industry of weaving cloth. So, in order to refer to the lowliness of his occupation he has been called 'weaver'. Yamanese had other occupations also but mostly this profession was followed among them. Describing their occupations Khálid ibn Safwán has mentioned this one first of all.

> What can I say about a people among whom there are only weavers, leather dyers, monkey keepers and donkey riders. The hoopoe found them out, the mouse flooded them and a woman ruled over them. (*al-Bayán wa't-tabyín,* vol. 1, p. 130)

The second reason is that *"hiyákah"* means walking by bending on either side, and since out of pride and conceit this man used to walk shrugging his shoulders and making bends in his body, he has been called *"háyik".*

The third reason is --- and it is more conspicuous and clear --- that he has been called a weaver to denote his foolishness and lowliness because every low person is proverbially known as a weaver. Their wisdom and sagacity can be well gauged by the fact that their follies had become proverbial, while nothing attains proverbial status without peculiar characteristics. Now, that Amír al-mu'minín has also confirmed it no further argument or reasoning is needed.

The fourth reason is that by this is meant the person who conspires against Alláh and the Holy Prophet and prepares webs of which is the peculiarity of hypocrites. Thus, in *Wasá'il ash-Shí`ah* (vol. 12, p. 101) it is stated:

> It was mentioned before Imám Ja`far as-Sádiq (p.b.u.h.) that the weaver is accursed when he explained that the weaver implies the person who concocts against Alláh and the Prophet.

After the word weaver Amír al-mu'minín has used the word hypocrite, and there is no conjunction in between them in order to emphasise the nearness of meaning thereof. Then, on the basis of this hypocrisy and concealment of truth he declared him deserving of the curse of Alláh and all others, as Alláh the Glorified says:

> *Verily, those that conceal what we have sent of* (Our) *manifest evidences and guidance, after what we have* (so) *clearly shown for mankind in the Book* (they are), *those that Alláh doth curse them and* (also) *curse them all those who curse* (such ones). (Qur'án, 2:159)

After this Amír al-mu'minín says that "You could not avoid the degradation of being prisoner when you were unbeliever, nor did these ignominies spare you after acceptance of Islam, and you were taken prisoner." When an unbeliever the event of his being taken prisoner occurred in this way that when the tribe of Banú Murád killed his father Qays, he (al-Ash`ath) collected the warriors of Banú Kindah and divided them in three groups. Over one group he himself took the command, and on the others he placed Kabs ibn Háni' and al-Qash`am ibn Yazíd al-Arqam as chiefs, and set off to deal with Banú Murád. But as misfortune would have it instead of Banú Murád he attacked Banú al-hárith ibn Ka`b. The result was that Kabs ibn Háni' and al-Qash`am ibn Yazíd al-Arqam were killed and this man was taken prisoner alive. Eventually he got a release by paying three thousand camels as ransom. In Amír al-mu'minín's words, "Your wealth or birth could not save you from either," the reference is not to real *'fidyah'* (release money) because he was actually released on payment of release money but the intention is that neither plenty of wealth nor his high position and prestige in his tribe could save him from this ignominy, and he could not protect himself from being a prisoner .

The event of his second imprisonment is that when the Holy Prophet of Islam passed away from this world a rebellion occurred in the region of Ha_ramawt for repelling which Caliph Abú Bakr wrote to the governor of the place Ziyád ibn Labíd al-Bayá_i. al-Ansárí that he should secure allegiance and collect *zakát* and charities from those people. When Ziyád ibn Labíd went to the tribe of Banú `Amr ibn Mu`áwiyah for collection of *zakát* he took keen fancy for a she-camel of Shaytán ibn Hujr which was very handsome and of huge body. He jumped over it and took possession of it. Shaytán ibn Hujr did not agree to spare it and said to him to take over some other she-camel in its place but Ziyád would not agree. Shaytán sent for his brother al-`Addá' ibn Hujr for his support. On coming he too had a talk but Ziyád insisted on his point and did not, by any means, consent to keep off his hand from that she-camel. At last both these brothers appealed to Masrúq ibn Ma`dí Karib for help. Consequently, Masrúq also used his influence so that Ziyád might leave the she-camel but he refused categorically, whereupon Masrúq became enthusiastic and untying the she-camel handed it over to Shaytán. On this Ziyád was infuriated and collecting his men became ready to fight. On the other side Banú Walí`ah also assembled to face them, but could not defeat Ziyád and were badly beaten at his hands. Their women were taken away and property was looted. Eventually those who had survived were obliged to take refuge under the protection of al-Ash`ath. Al-Ash`ath promised assistance on the condition that he should be acknowledged ruler of the area. Those people agreed to this condition and his coronation was also formally solemnised. After having his authority acknowledged he arranged an army and set out to fight Ziyád. On the other side Abú Bakr had written to the chief of Yemen, al-Muhájir ibn Abí Umayyah to go for the help of Ziyád with a contingent. Al-Muhájir was coming with his contingent when they came face to face. Seeing each other they drew swords and commenced fighting at a_-Zurqán. In the end al-Ash`ath fled from the battle-field and taking his remaining men closed himself in the fort of an-Nujayr. The enemy was such as to let them alone. They laid siege around the fort. Al-Ash`ath thought how long could he remain shut up in the fort with this lack of equipment and men, and that he should think out some way of escape. So one night he stealthily came out of the fort and met Ziyád and al-Muhájir and conspired with them that if they gave asylum to nine members of his family he would get the fort gate opened. They accepted this term and asked him to write for them the names of those nine persons. He wrote down the nine names and made them over to them, but acting on his traditional wisdom forgot to write his own name in that list. After settling this he told his people that he has secured protection for them and the gate of the fort should be opened. When the gate was opened Ziyád forces pounced upon them. They said they had been promised protection whereupon Ziyád's army said that this was wrong and that al-Ash`ath had asked protection only for nine members of his house, whose names preserved with them. In short eight hundred persons were put to sword and hands of several women were chopped off, while according to the settlement nine men were left off, but the case of al-Ash`ath became complicated. Eventually it was decided he should be sent to Abú Bakr and he should decided about him. At last he was sent to Medina in chains along with a thousand women prisoners. On the way relations and others, men and women, all hurled curses at him and the women were calling him traitor and one who got his own people put to sword. Who else can be a greater traitor? However, when he reached Medina Abú Bakr released him and on that occasion he was married to Umm Farwah.

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SERMON 20

Death and taking lessons from it

If you could see that has been seen by those of you who have died, you would be puzzled and troubled. Then you would have listened and obeyed; but what they have seen is yet curtained off from you. Shortly, the curtain would be thrown off. You have been shown, provided you see and you have been made to listen provided you listen, and you have been guided if you accept guidance. I spoke unto you with truth. You have been called aloud by (instructive) examples and warned through items full of warnings. After the heavenly messengers (angels), only man can convey message from Alláh. (So what I am conveying is from Alláh).

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SERMON 21

Advice to keep light in this world

Your aim (reward or punishment) is before you. Behind your back is the hour (of resurrection) which is driving you on. Keep (yourself) light and overtake (the forward ones). Your last ones are being awaited by the first ones (who have preceded).

as-Sayyid ar-Radí says: If this utterance of `Alí (p.b.u.h.) is weighed with any other utterance except the word of Alláh or of the Holy Prophet, it would prove heavier and superior in every respect. For example, `Alí's saying "Keep light and overtake" is the shortest expression ever heard with the greatest sense conveyed by it. How wide is its meaning and how clear its spring of wisdom! We have pointed out the greatness and meaningfulness of this phrase in our book *al-Khasá'is.*

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SERMON 22

About those who accused him of `Uthmán's killing

Beware! Satan has certainly started instigating his forces and has collected his army in order that oppression may reach its extreme ends and wrong may come back to its position. By Alláh they have not put a correct blame on me, nor have they done justice between me and themselves.

They are demanding of me a right which they have abandoned, and a blood that they have themselves shed.(1) If I were a partner with them in it then they too have their share of it. But if they did it without me they alone have to face the consequences. Their biggest argument (against me) is (really) against themselves. They are suckling from a mother who is already dry, and bringing into life innovation that is already dead. How disappointing is this challenger (to battle)? Who is this challenger and for what is he being responded to? I am happy that the reasoning of Alláh has been exhausted before them and He knows (all) about them.

The threat to Wage War against them

If they refuse (to obey) I will offer them the edge of the sword which is enough a curer of wrong and supporter of Right.

It is strange they send me word to proceed to them for spear-fighting and to keep ready for fighting with swords. May the mourning women mourn over them. I have ever been so that I was never frightened by fighting nor threatened by clashing. I enjoy full certainty of belief from my Alláh and have no doubt in my faith.

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(1). When Amír al-mu'minín was accused of `Uthmán's assassination he delivered this sermon to refute that allegation, wherein he says about those who blamed him that: "These seekers of vengeance cannot say that I alone am the assassin and that no one else took part in it. Nor can they falsify witnessed events by saying that they were unconcerned with it. Why then have they put me foremost for this avenging? With me they should include themselves also. If I am free of this blame they cannot establish their freedom from it. How can they detach themselves from this punishment? The truth of the matter is that by accusing me of this charge their aim is that I should behave with them in the same manner to which they are accustomed. But they should not expect from me that I would revive the innovations of the previous regimes. As for fighting, neither was I ever afraid of it nor am I so now. Alláh knows my intention and He also knows that those standing on the excuse of taking revenge are themselves his assassins." Thus, history corroborates that the people who managed his (`Uthmán's) assassination by agitation and had even prevented his burial in Muslims' graveyard by hurling stones at his coffin were the same who rose for avenging his blood. In this connection, the names of Talhah ibn `Ubaydilláh, az-Zubayr ibn al-`Awwám and `Á'ishah are at the top of the list since on both occasions their efforts come to sight with conspicuity. Thus Ibn Abi'l-hadíd writes that:

> Those who have written the account of assassination of `Uthmán state that on the day of his killing Talhah's condition was that in order to obscure himself from the eyes of the people he had a veil on his face and was shooting arrows at `Uthmán's house.
>
> And in this connection, about az-Zubayr's ideas he writes:
>
> Historians have also state that az-Zubayr used to say "Kill `Uthmán. He has altered your faith." People said, "Your son is standing at his door and guarding him," and he replied, "Even my son may be lost, but `Uthmán must be killed. `Uthmán will be lying like a carcass on Sirát tomorrow." (*Sharh Nahj al-balághah*, vol.9, pp. 35-36)
>
> About `Á'ishah, Ibn `Abd Rabbih writes:
>
> al-Mughírah ibn Shu`bah came to `Á'ishah when she said, "O' Abú `Abdilláh, I wish you had been with me on the day of Jamal; how arrows were piercing through my *hawdaj* (camel litter) till some of them stuck my body." al- Mughírah said, "I wish one of them should have killed you." She said, "Alláh may have pity you; why

so?" He replied, "So that it would have been some atonement for what you had done against `Uthmán." (*al-`Iqd al-faríd*, vol. 4, p. 294)

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SERMON 23

About keeping aloof from envy, and good behaviour towards kith and kin

Now then, verily Divine orders descend from heaven to earth like drops of rain, bringing to every one what is destined for him whether plenty or paucity. So if any one of you observes for his brother plenty of progeny or of wealth or of self, it should not be a worry for him. So long as a Muslim does not commit such an act that if it is disclosed he has to bend his eyes (in shame) and by which low people are emboldened, he is like the gambler who expects that the first draw of his arrow would secure him gain and also cover up the previous loss.

Similarly, the Muslim who is free from dishonesty expects one of the two good things: either call from Alláh and in that case whatever is with Alláh is the best for him, or the livelihood of Alláh. He has already children and property while his faith and respect are with him. Certainly, wealth and children are the plantations of this world while virtuous deed is the plantation of the next world. Sometimes Alláh joins all these in some groups.

Beware of Alláh against what He has cautioned you and keep afraid of Him to the extent that no excuse be needed for it. Act without show or intention of being heard, for if a man acts for some one else then Alláh makes him over to that one. We ask Alláh (to grant us) the positions of the martyrs, company of the virtuous and friendship of the prophets.

O' people! surely no one (even though he may be rich) can do without his kinsmen, and their support by hands or tongues. They alone are his support from rear and can ward off from him his troubles, and they are the most kind to him when tribulations befall him. The good memory of a man that Alláh retains among people is better than the property which others inherit from him.

In the same sermon

Behold! If any one of you finds your near ones in want or starvation, he should not desist from helping them with that which will not increase if this help is not extended, nor decrease by thus spending it. Whoever holds up his hand from (helping) his kinsmen, he holds only one hand, but at the time of his need many hands remain held up from helping him. One who is sweet tempered can retain the love of his people for good.

as-Sayyid ar-Radí says: In this sermon "*al-ghafírah*" means plenty or abundance, and this is derived from the Arab saying, "*al-jamm al-ghafír*" or "*al-jammá' al-ghafír*" meaning thick crowd. In some versions for "*al-ghafiráh*" "*`afwatan*" appears. "*`afwah*" means the good and selected part of anything. It is said "*akaltu `afwata 't-ta`ám*", to mean "I ate select meal." About "*wa man yaqbi_ yadahu `an `ashíratihi*" appearing towards the end he points out how beautiful the meaning of this sentence is, Amír al-mu'minín implies that he who does not help his own kinsmen withholds only his hand but when he is in need of their assistance and would be looking for their sympathy and support then he would remain deprived of the sympathies and succour of so many of their extending hands and marching feet.

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SERMON 24

Exhorting people for jihád

By my life there will be no regard for anyone nor slackening from me in fighting against one who opposes right or gropes in misguidance. O' creatures of Alláh, fear Alláh and flee unto Alláh from His wrath (seek protection in His Mercy). Tread on the path He has laid down for you and stand by what He has enjoined upon you. In that case `Alí would stand surety for your success (salvation) eventually even though you may not get it immediately (i.e. in this world).

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SERMON 25

When Amír al-mu'minín received successive news that Mu`áwiyah's men were occupying cities(1) and his own officers in Yemen namely `Ubaydulláh ibn `Abbás and Sa`íd ibn Nimrán came to him etreating after being overpowered by Busr ibn Abí Artát, he was much disturbed by the slackness of his own men in jihád and their difference with his opinion. Proceeding on to the pulpit he said:

Nothing (is left to me) but Kúfah which I can hold and extend (which is in my hand to play with). (O' Kúfah) if this is your condition that whirlwinds continue blowing through you then Alláh may destroy you.

Then he illustrated with the verse of a poet:

> *O' `Amr! By your good father's life. I have received only a small bit of fat from this pot* (fat that remains sticking to it after it has been emptied).

Then he continued:

I have been informed that Busr has overpowered Yemen. By Alláh, I have begun thinking about these people that they would shortly snatch away the whole country through their unity on their wrong and your disunity (from your own right), and separation, your disobedience of your Imám in matters of right and their obedience to their leader in matters of wrong, their fulfilment of the trust in favour of their master and your betrayal, their good work in their cities and your mischief. Even if I give you charge of a wooden bowl I fear you would run away with its handle.

O' my Alláh they are disgusted of me and I am disgusted of them. They are weary of me and I am weary of them. Change them for me with better ones and change me for them with worse one. O' my Alláh melt their hearts as salt melts in water. By Alláh I wish I had only a thousand horsemen of Banú Firás ibn Ghanm (as the poet says):

> *If you call them the horsemen would come to you like the summer cloud.*

(Thereafter Amír al-mu'minín alighted from the pulpit):

as-Sayyid ar-Radí says: In this verse the word "*armiyah*" is plural of "*ramiyy*" which means cloud and "*hamím*" here means summer. The poet has particularised the cloud of summer because it moves swiftly. This is because it is devoid of water while a cloud moves slowly when it is laden with rain. Such clouds generally appear (in Arabia) in winter. By this verse the poet intends to convey that when they are called and referred to for help they approach with rapidity and this is borne by the first line "if you call them they will reach you."

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(1). When after arbitration Mu`áwiyah's position was stabilised he began thinking of taking possession of Amír al-mu'minín's cities and extend his domain. He sent his armies to different areas in order that they might secure allegiance for Mu`áwiyah by force. In this connection he sent Busr ibn Abí Artát to Hijáz and he shed blood of thousands of innocent persons from Hijáz upto Yemen, burnt alive tribes after tribes in fire and killed even children, so much so that he butchered two young boys of `Ubaydulláh ibn `Abbás the Governor of Yemen before their mother Juwayriyah bint Khálid ibn Qara~ al-Kinániyyah.

When Amír al-mu'minín came to know of his slaughtering and blood shed he thought of sending a contingent to crush him but due to continuous fighting people had become weary and showed heartlessness instead of zeal. When Amír al-mu'minín observed their shirking from war he delivered this sermon wherein he roused them to enthusiasm and self respect, and prompted them to *jihád* by describing before them the enemy's wrongfulness and their own short-comings. At last Járiyah ibn Qudámah as-Sa`dí responded to his call and taking an army of two thousand set off in pursuit of Busr and chased him out of Amír al-mu'minín's domain.

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SERMON 26

Arabia before proclamation of Prophethood

Alláh sent Muhammad (p.b.u.h.a.h.p.) as a warner (against vice) for all the worlds and a trustee of His revelation, while you people of Arabia were following the worst religion and you resided among rough stones and venomous serpents. You drank dirty water and ate filthy food. You shed blood of each other and cared not for relationship. Idols are fixed among you and sins are clinging to you.

Part of the same sermon on the attentiveness of the people after the death of the Holy Prophet

I looked and found that there is no supporter for me except family, so I refrained from thrusting them unto death. I kept my eyes closed despite motes in them. I drank despite choking of throat. I exercised patience despite trouble in breathing and despite having to take sour colocynth as food.

Part of the same sermon on the settlement between Mu`áwiyah and `Amr ibn al-`ÁS

He did not swear allegiance till he got him to agree that he would pay him its price. The hand of this purchaser (of allegiance) may not be successful and the contract of the seller may face disgrace. Now you should take up arms for war and arrange equipment for it. Its flames have grown high and its brightness has increased. Clothe yourself with patience for it is the best to victory.(1)

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(1). Amír al-mu'minín had delivered a sermon before setting off for Nahrawán. These are three parts from it. In the first part he has described the condition of Arabia before Proclamation (of Prophethood); in the second he has referred to circumstances which forced him to keep quiet and in the third he has described the conversation and settlement between Mu`áwiyah and `Amr ibn al-`ÁS. The position of this mutual settlement was that when Amír al-mu'minín sent Jarír ibn `Abdilláh al-Bajalí to Mu`áwiyah to secure his allegiance he detained Jarír under the excuse of giving a reply, and in the meantime he began exploring how far the people of Syria would support him. When he succeeded in making them his supporters by rousing them to avenge `Uthmán's blood he consulted his brother `Utbah ibn Abí Sufyán. He suggested, "If in this matter `Amr ibn al-`ÁS was associated he would solve most of the difficulties through his sagacity, but he would not be easily prepared to stabilise your authority unless he got the price he desired for it. If you are ready for this he would prove the best counsellor and helper." Mu`áwiyah liked this suggestion, sent for `Amr ibn al-`ÁS and discussed with him, and eventually it was settled that he would avenge `Uthmán's blood by holding Amír al-mu'minín liable for it in exchange for the governorship of Egypt, and by whatever means possible would not let Mu`áwiyah's authority in Syria suffer. Consequently, both of them fulfilled the agreement and kept their words fully.

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SERMON 27

Exhorting people for jihád

Now then, surely *jihád* is one of the doors of Paradise, which Alláh has opened for His chief friends. It is the dress of piety and the protective armour of Alláh and His trustworthy shield. Whoever abandons it Alláh covers him with the dress of disgrace and the clothes of distress. He is kicked with contempt and scorn, and his heart is veiled with screens (of neglect). Truth is taken away from him because of missing *jihád*. He has to suffer ignominy and justice is denied to him.

Beware! I called you (insistently) to fight these people night and day, secretly and openly and exhorted you to attack them before they attacked you, because by Alláh, no people have been attacked in the hearts of their houses but they suffered disgrace; but you put it off to others and forsook it till destruction befell you and your cities were occupied. The horsemen of Banú Ghámid(1) have reached al-Anbár and killed Hassán ibn Hassán al-Bakrí. They have removed your horsemen from the garrison.

I have come to know that every one of them entered upon Muslim women and other women under protection of Islam and took away their ornaments from legs, arms, necks and ears and no woman could resist it except by pronouncing the verse*, "We are for Alláh and to Him we shall return."* (Qur'án, 2 :156) Then they got back laden with wealth without any wound or loss of life. If any Muslim dies of grief after all this he is not to be blamed but rather there is justification for him before me.

How strange! How strange! By Alláh my heart sinks to see the unity of these people on their wrong and your dispersion from your right. Woe and grief befall you. You have become the target at which arrows are shot. You are being killed and you do not kill. You are being attacked but you do not attack. Alláh is being disobeyed and you remain agreeable to it. When I ask you to move against them in summer you say it is hot weather. Spare us till heat subsides from us. When I order you to march in winter you say it is severely cold; give us time till cold clears from us. These are just excuses for evading heat and cold because if you run away from heat and cold, you would be, by Alláh, running away (in a greater degree) from sword (war).

O' you semblance of men, not men, your intelligence is that of children and your wit is that of the occupants of the curtained canopies (women kept in seclusion from the outside world). I wish I had not seen you nor known you. By Alláh, this acquaintance has brought about shame and resulted in repentance. May Alláh fight you! You have filled my heart with pus and loaded my bosom with rage. You made me drink mouthful of grief one after the other. You shattered my counsel by disobeying and leaving me so much so that Quraysh started saying that the son of Abí Tálib is brave but does not know (tactics of) war. Alláh bless them ! Is any one of them more fierce in war and more older in it than I am? I rose for it although yet within twenties, and here I am, have crossed over sixty, but one who is not obeyed can have no opinion.

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(1). After the battle of Siffín, Mu`áwiyah had spread killing and bloodshed all round, and started encroachments on cities within Amír al-mu'minín's domain. In this connection he deputised Sufyán ibn `Awf al-Ghámidí with a force of six thousand to attack Hít, al-Anbár and al-Madá'in. First he reached al-Madá'in but finding it deserted proceeded to al-Anbár. Here a contingent of five hundred soldiers was posted as guard from Amír al-mu'minín's side, but it could not resist the fierce army of Mu`áwiyah. Only a hundred men stuck to their position and they did face them stoutly as far as they could but collecting together the enemy's force made such a severe attack that they too could no more resist and the chief of the contingent Hassán ibn Hassán al-Bakrí was killed along with thirty others. When the battlefield was clear the enemy ransacked al-Anbár with full freedom and left the city completely destroyed.

When Amír al-mu'minín got the news of this attack he ascended the pulpit, and exhorted the people for crushing the enemy and called them to *jihád*, but from no quarter was there any voice or response. He alighted from the pulpit utterly disgusted and worried and in the same condition set off for the enemy on foot. When people observed this their sense of self respect and shame was also awakened and they too followed him. Amír al-mu'minín stopped at an-Nukhaylah. People then surrounded and insisted upon him to get back as they were enough with the enemy. When their insistence increased beyond reckoning, Amír al-mu'minín consented to return and Sa`íd ibn Qays al-Hamdání proceeded forward with a force of eight thousand. But Sufyán ibn `Awf al-Ghámidí had gone, so Sa`íd came

back without any encounter. When Sa`íd reached Kúfah then - according to the version of Ibn Abi'l-hadíd - Amír al-mu'minín was so deeply grieved and indisposed during those days to an extent of not wishing to enter the mosque, but instead sat in the corridor of his residence (that connects the entrance of the mosque) and wrote this sermon and gave it to his slave Sa`d to read it over to the people. But al-Mubarrad (*al-Kámil*, vol. 1, pp. 104-107) has related from `Ubaydulláh ibn Hafs al-Taymí, Ibn `Á'ishah, that Amír al-mu'minín delivered this sermon on a high pace in an-Nukhaylah. Ibn Maytham has held this view preferable.

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SERMON 28

About the transient nature of this world and importance of the next world

So now, surely this world has turned its back and announced its departure while the next world has appeared forward and proclaimed its approach. Today is the day of preparation while tomorrow is the day of race. The place to proceed to is Paradise while the place of doom is Hell. Is there no one to offer repentance over his faults before his death? Or is there no one to perform virtuous acts before the day of trial?

Beware, surely you are in the days of hopes behind which stands death. Whoever acts during the days of his hope before approach of his death, his action would benefit him and his death would not harm him. But he who fails to act during the period of hope before the approach of death his action is a loss and his death is a harm to him. Beware, and act during a period of attraction just as you act during a period of dread. Beware, surely I have not seen a coveter for Paradise asleep nor a dreader from Hell to be asleep. Beware, he whom right does not benefit must suffer the harm of the wrong, and he whom guidance does not keep firm will be led away by misguidance towards destruction.

Beware, you have been ordered insistently to march and been guided how to provide for the journey. Surely the most frightening thing which I am afraid of about you is to follow desires and to widen the hopes. Provide for yourself from this world what would save you tomorrow (on the Day of Judgement).

as-Sayyid ar-Radí says: If there could be an utterance which would drag by neck towards renunciation in this world and force to action for the next world, it is this sermon. It is enough to cut off from the entanglements of hopes and to ignite the flames of preaching (for virtue) and warning (against vice). His most wonderful words in this sermon are "Today is the day of preparation while tomorrow is the day of race. The place to proceed to is Paradise while the place of doom is Hell," because besides sublimity of words, greatness of meaning, true similes and factual illustrations, there are wonderful secrets and delicate implications therein.

It is his saying that he place to proceed to is Paradise while the place of doom is Hell. Here he has used two different words to convey two different meanings. For Paradise he has used the word "the place to proceed to" but for Hell this word has not been used. One proceeds to a place which he likes and desires, and this can be true for Paradise only. Hell does not have the attractiveness that it may be liked or proceeded to. We seek Alláh's protection from it. Since for Hell it was not proper to say "to be proceeded to" Amír al-mu'minín employed the word "doom" implying the last place of stay where one reaches even though it may mean grief and worry or happiness and pleasure.

This word is capable of conveying both senses. However, it should be taken in the sense *of "al-masír"* or *"al-ma'ál"*, that is, last resort. Qur'ánic verse is "*say thou "Enjoy ye* (your pleasures yet a while), *for your last resort is unto the* (hell) *fire"* (14:30). Here to say *"sabqatakum"* that is, "the place for you to proceed to" in place of the word *"masírakum"* that is, your doom or last resort would not be proper in any way. Think and ponder over it and see how wondrous is its inner implication and how far its depth goes with beauty. Amír al-mu'minín's utterance is generally on these lines. In some versions the word *"sabqah"* is shown as *"subqah"* which is applied to reward fixed for the winner in a race. However, both the meanings are near each other, because a reward is not for an undesirable action but for good and commendable performance.

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SERMON 29

About those who found pretexts at the time of jihád

O’ people, your bodies are together but your desires are divergent. Your talk softens the hard stones and your action attracts your enemy towards you. You claim in your sittings that you would do this and that, but when fighting approaches, you say (to war), “turn thou away” (i.e. flee away). If one calls you (for help) the call receives no heed. And he who deals hardly with you his heart has no solace. The excuses are amiss like that of a debtor unwilling to pay. The ignoble can not ward off oppression. Right cannot be achieved without effort. Which is the house besides this one to protect? And with which leader (Imám) would you go for fighting after me?

By Alláh! deceived is one whom you have deceived while, by Alláh! he who is successful with you receives only useless arrows. You are like broken arrows thrown over the enemy. By Alláh! I am now in the position that I neither confirm your views nor hope for your support, nor challenge the enemy through you. What is the matter with you? What is your ailment? What is your cure? The other party is also men of your shape (but they are so different in character). Will there be talk without action, carelessness without piety and greed in things not right? ! (1)

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(1). After the battle of Nahrawán, Mu`áwiyah sent ad-Dahhák ibn Qays al-Fihrí with a force of four thousand towards Kufáh with the purpose that he should create disorder in this area, kill whomever he finds and keep busy in bloodshed and destruction so that Amír al-mu’minín should find no rest or peace of mind. He set off for the achievement of this aim, and shedding innocent blood and spreading destruction all round reached upto the place of ath-Tha`labiyyah. Here he attacked a caravan of pilgrims (to Mecca) and looted all their wealth and belongings. Then at al-Quttqutanah he killed the nephew of `Abdulláh ibn Mas`úd, the Holy Prophet’s companion, namely `Amr ibn `Uways ibn Mas`úd together with his followers. In this manner he created havoc and bloodshed all round. When Amír al-mu’minín came to know of this rack and ruin he called his men to battle in order to put a stop to this vandalism, but people seemed to avoid war. Being disgusted with their lethargy and lack of enthusiasm he ascended the pulpit and delivered this sermon, wherein he has roused the men to feel shame and not to try to avoid war but to rise for the protection of their country like brave men without employing wrong and lame excuses. At last Hujr ibn `Adí al-Kindí rose with a force of four thousand for crushing the enemy and overtook him at Tadmur. Only a small encounter had taken place between the parties when night came on and he fled away with only nineteen killed on his side. In Amír al-mu’minín’s army also two persons fell as martyrs.

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SERMON 30

Disclosing real facts about assassination of `Uthmán Ibn `Affán(1) Amír al-mu'minín said:

If I had ordered his assassination I should have been his killer, but if I had refrained others from killing him I would have been his helper. The position was that he who helped him cannot now say that he is better than the one who deserted him while he who deserted him cannot say that he is better than the one who helped him. I am putting before you his case. He appropriated (wealth) and did it badly. You protested against it and committed excess therein. With Alláh lies the real verdict between the appropriator and the protester.

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(1). `Uthmán is the first Umayyad Caliph of Islam who ascended the Caliphate on the 1st Muharram, 24 A.H. at the age of seventy and after having wielded full control and authority over the affairs of the Muslims for twelve years was killed at their hands on the 18th Dhi'l-hijjah, 35 A.H. and buried at Hashsh Kawkab.

This fact cannot be denied that `Uthmán's killing was the result of his weaknesses and the black deeds of his officers, otherwise, there is no reason that Muslims should have unanimously agreed on killing him while no one except a few persons of his house stood up to support and defend him. Muslims would have certainly given consideration to his age, seniority, prestige and distinction of companionship of the Prophet but his ways and deeds had so marred the atmosphere that no one seemed prepared to sympathise and side with him. The oppression and excesses perpetrated on high ranking companions of the Prophet had roused a wave of grief and anger among the Arab tribes. Everyone was infuriated and looked at his haughtiness and wrong doings with disdainful eyes. Thus, due to Abú Dharr's disgrace, dishonour and exile Banú Ghifár and their associate tribes, due to `Abdulláh ibn Mas`úd's merciless beating Banú Hudhayl and their associates, due to breaking of the ribs of `Ammár ibn Yásir, Banú Makhzúm and their associates Banú Zuhrah, and due to the plot for the killing of Muhammad ibn Abí Bakr, Banú Taym all had a storm of rage in their hearts. The Muslims of other cities were also brimful of complaints at the hands of his officers who under intoxication of wealth and the effects of luxury did whatever they wished and crushed whomever they wanted. They had no fear of punishment from the centre nor apprehension of any enquiry. People were fluttering to get out of their talons of oppression but no one was ready to listen to their cries of pain and restlessness; feelings of hatred were rising but no care was taken to put them down. The companions of the Prophet were also sick of him as they saw that peace was destroyed, administration was topsy turvy and Islam's features were being metamorphosed. The poor and the starving were craving for dried crusts while Banú Umayyah were rolling in wealth. The Caliphate had become a handle for belly-filling and a means of amassing wealth. Consequently, they too did not lag behind in preparing the ground for killing him. Rather, it was at their letters and messages that people from Kufáh, Basrah and Egypt had collected in Medina. Observing this behaviour of the people of Medina, `Uthmán wrote to Mu`áwiyah:

> So now, certainly the people of Medina have turned heretics, have turned faith against obedience and broken the (oath of) allegiance. So you send to me the warriors of Syria on brisk and sturdy horses.

The policy of action adopted by Mu`áwiyah on receipt of this letter also throws light on the condition of the companions. Historian at-Tabarí writes after this:

> When the letter reached Mu`áwiyah he pondered over it and considered it bad to openly oppose the companions of the Prophet since he was aware of their unanimity.

In view of these circumstances to regard the killing of `Uthmán as a consequence of merely enthusiasm and temporary feelings and to hurl it at some insurgents is to veil the fact, since all the factors of his opposition existed within Medina itself, while those coming from without had collected for seeking redress of their grievances at their call. Their aim was only improvement of the position, not killing or bloodshed. If their complaints had been heard then the occasion for this bloodshed would not have arisen. What happened was that when, having been disgusted with the oppression and excesses of `Abdulláh ibn Sa`d ibn Abí Sarh, who was foster brother of `Uthmán, the people of Egypt proceeded towards Medina and camped in the valley of Dhákhushub near the city. They sent a man with a letter to `Uthmán and demanded that oppression should be stopped, the existing ways should be changed and repentance should be offered for the future. But instead of giving a reply `Uthmán got this man turned out of the house and did not regard their demands worth attention. On this these people entered the city to raise their voice against this pride and haughtiness, and complained to the people of this behaviour besides other excesses. On the other side many people

from Kufáh and Basrah had also arrived with their complaints and they, after joining these ones, proceeded forward with the backing of the people of Medina and confined `Uthmán within his house, although there was no restriction on his going and coming to the mosque. But in his sermon on the very first Friday he severely rebuked these people and even held them accursed, whereupon people got infuriated and threw pebbles at him as a result of which he lost control and fell from the pulpit. After a few days his coming and going to the mosque was also banned.

When `Uthmán saw matters deteriorating to this extent he implored Amír al-mu'minín very submissively to find some way for his rescue and to disperse the people in whatever way he could. Amír al-mu'minín said, "On what terms can I ask them to leave when their demands are justified?" `Uthmán said, "I authorise you in this matter. Whatever terms you would settle with them I would be bound by them." So Amír al-mu'minín went and met the Egyptians and talked to them. They consented to get back on the condition that all the tyrannies should be wiped off and Muhammad ibn Abí Bakr be made governor by removing Ibn Abí Sarh. Amír al-mu'minín came back and put their demand before `Uthmán who accepted it without any hesitation and said that to get over these excesses time was required. Amír al-mu'minín pointed out that for matters concerning Medina delay had no sense. However, for other places so much time could be allowed that the Caliph's message could reach them. `Uthmán insisted that for Medina also three days were needed. After discussion with the Egyptians Amír al-mu'minín agreed to it also and took all the responsibility thereof upon himself. Then they dispersed at his suggestion. Some of them went to Egypt with Muhammad ibn Abí Bakr while some went to the valley of Dhákhushub and stayed there and this whole matter ended. On the second day of this event Marwán ibn al-Hakam said to `Uthmán, "It is good, these people have gone, but to stop people coming from other cities you should issue a statement so that they should not come this way and sit quiet at their places and that statement should be that some people collected in Medina on hearing some irresponsible talk but when they came to know that whatever they heard was wrong they were satisfied and have gone back." `Uthmán did not want to speak such a clear lie but Marwán convinced him and he agreed, and speaking in the Holy Prophet's mosque, he said:

> These Egyptians had received some news about their Caliph and when satisfied that they were all baseless and wrong they went back to their cities.

No sooner he said this than there was great hue and cry in the mosque, and people began to shout to `Uthmán, "Offer repentance, fear Alláh; what is this lie you are uttering?" `Uthmán was confused in this commotion and had to offer repentance. Consequently, he turned to the Ka`bah, moaned in the audience of Alláh and returned to his house.

Probably after this very event Amír al-mu'minín advised `Uthmán that, "You should openly offer repentance about your past misdeeds so that these uprisings should subside for good otherwise if tomorrow people of some other place come you will again cling to my neck to rid you of them." Consequently, he delivered a speech in the Prophet's mosque wherein admitting his mistakes he offered repentance and swore to remain careful in future. He told the people that when he alighted from the pulpit their representatives should meet him, and he would remove their grievances and meet their demands. On this people acclaimed this action of his and washed away their ill-feelings with tears to a great extent. When he reached his house after finishing from here Marwán sought permission to say something but `Uthmán's wife Ná'ilah bint Faráfisah intervened. Turning to Marwán she said, "For Alláh's sake you keep quiet. You would say only such a thing as would bring but death to him." Marwán took it ill and retorted, "You have no right to interfere in these matters. You are the daughter of that very person who did not know till his death how to perform ablution." Ná'ilah replied with fury, "You are wrong, and are laying a false blame. Before uttering anything about my father you should have cast a glance on the features of your father. But for the consideration of that old man I would have spoken things at which people would have shuddered but would have confirmed every such word." When `Uthmán saw the conversation getting prolonged he stopped them and asked Marwán to tell him what he wished.
Marwán said, "What is it you have said in the mosque, and what repentance you have offered? In my view sticking to the sin was a thousand times better than this repentance because however much the sins may multiply there is always scope for repentance, but repentance by force is no repentance. You have said what you have but now see the consequences of this open announcement, that crowds of people are at your door. Now go forward and fulfil their demands." `Uthmán then said, "Well, I have said what I have said, now you deal with these people. It is not in my power to deal with them." Consequently, finding out his implied consent Marwán came out and addressing the people spoke out, "Why have you assembled here? Do you intend to attack or to ransack? Remember, you cannot easily snatch away power from our hands, take out the idea from your hearts that you would subdue us. We are not to be subdued by anyone. Take away your black faces from here. Alláh may disgrace and dishonour you."

When people noticed this changed countenance and altered picture they rose from there full of anger and rage and went straight to Amír al-mu'minín and related to him the whole story. On hearing it Amír al-mu'minín was infuriated and immediately went to `Uthmán and said to him, "Good Heavens. How badly you have behaved with the Muslims. You have forsaken faith for the sake of a faithless and characterless man and have lost all wit. At least you should have regard and consideration for your own promise. What is this that at Marwán's betokening you have set off with folded eyes. Remember he will throw you in such a dark well that you will never be able to come out of it. You have become the carrier animal of Marwán so that he can ride on you howsoever he desires and put you on whatever wrong way he wishes. In future I shall never intervene in your affair nor tell people anything. Now you should manage your own affairs."

Saying all this Amír al-mu'minín got back and Ná'ilah got the chance, she said to `Uthmán, "Did I not tell you to get rid of Marwán otherwise he would put such a stain on you that it would not be removed despite all effort. Well, what is the good in following the words of one who is without any respect among the people and low before their eyes. Make `Alí agree otherwise remember that restoring the disturbed state of affairs is neither within your power nor in that of Marwán." `Uthmán was impressed by this and sent a man after Amír al-mu'minín but he refused to meet him. There was no siege around `Uthmán but shame deterred him. With what face could he come out of the house? But there was no way without coming out. Consequently, he came out quietly in the gloom of night and reaching Amír al-mu'minín's place, he moaned his helplessness and loneliness, offered excuses, and also assured him of keeping promises but Amír al-mu'minín said, "You make a promise in the Prophet's mosque standing before all the people but it is fulfilled in this way that when people go to you they are rebuked and even abuses are hurled at them. When this is the state of your undertakings which the world has seen, then how and on what ground can I trust any word of yours in future. Do not have any expectation from me now. I am not prepared to accept any responsibility on your behalf. The tracks are open before you. Adopt whichever way you like and tread whatever track you choose." After this talk `Uthmán came back and began blaming Amír al-mu'minín in retort to the effect that all the disturbances were rising at his instance and that he was not doing anything despite being able to do everything.

On this side the result of repentance was as it was. Now let us see the other side. When after crossing the border of Hijáz, Muhammad ibn Abí Bakr reached the place Aylah on the coast of the Red Sea people caught sight of a camel rider who was making his camel run so fast as though the enemy was chasing him. These people had some misgivings about him and therefore called him and enquired who he was. He said he was the slave of `Uthmán. They enquired wherefore he was bound. He said Egypt. They enquired to whom he was going. He replied to the Governor of Egypt. People said that the Governor of Egypt was with them. To whom was he going then? He said he was to go to Ibn Abí Sarh. People asked him if any letter was with him. He denied. They asked for what purpose he was going. He said he did not know that. One of these people thought that his clothes should be searched. So the search was made, but nothing was found on him. Kinánah ibn Bishr at-Tujíbí said, "See his water-skin." People said, "Leave him, how can there be a letter in water! Kinánah said, "You do not know what cunning these people play. " Consequently, the water-skin was opened and seen. There was a lead pipe in it wherein was a letter. When it was opened and read, the Caliph's order in it was that "When Muhammad ibn Abí Bakr and his party reaches you then from among them kill so and so, arrest so and so, and put so and so in jail, but you remain on your post." On reading this all were stunned and thus began to look at one another in astonishment.

A Persian hemistich says:

Mind was just burst in astonishment as to what wonder it was!

Now proceeding forward was riding into the mouth of death, consequently they returned to Medina taking the slave with them. Reaching there they placed that letter before all the companions of the Prophet. Whoever heard this incident remained stunned with astonishment, and there was no one who was not abusing `Uthmán. Afterwards a few companions went to `Uthmán along with these people, and asked whose seal was there on this letter. He replied that it was his own. They enquired whose writing it was. He said it was his secretary's. They enquired whose slave was that man. He replied that it was his. They enquired whose riding beast it was. He replied that it was that of the Government. They enquired who had sent it. He said he had no knowledge of it. People then said, "Good Heavens. Everything is yours but you do not know who had sent it. If you are so helpless, you leave this Caliphate and get off from it so that such a man comes who can administer the affairs of the Muslims." He replied, "It is not possible that I should put off the dress of Caliphate which Alláh has put on me. Of course, I would offer repentance." The people said, "Why should you speak of repentance which has already been flouted on the day when Marwán was representing you on your door, and whatever was wanting has been made up by this letter. Now we are not going to be duped into these bluffs. Leave the Caliphate and if our brethren stand in our way we will hold them up; but if they prepare for fighting we too will fight. Neither our hands are stiff nor our swords blunt. If you regard all Muslims equally and uphold justice hand over

Marwán to us to enable us to enquire from him on whose strength and support he wanted to play with the precious lives of Muslims by writing this letter." But he rejected this demand and refused to hand over Marwán to them, whereupon people said that the letter had been written at his behest.

However, improving conditions again deteriorated and they ought to have deteriorated because despite lapse of the required time every thing was just as it had been and not a jot of difference had occurred. Consequently, the people who had stayed behind in the valley of Dhákhushub to watch the result of repentance again advanced like a flood and spread over the streets of Medina, and closing the borders from every side surrounded his house.

During these days of siege a companion of the Prophet, Niyar ibn `Iyá_ desired to talk to `Uthmán, went to his house and called him. When he peeped out from the above he said, "O' `Uthmán, for Alláh's sake give up this Caliphate and save Muslims from this bloodshed." While he was just conversing, one of `Uthmán's men aimed at him with an arrow and killed him, whereupon people were infuriated and shouted that Niyar's killer should be handed over to them. `Uthmán said it was not possible that he would hand over his own support to them. This stubbornness worked like a fan on fire and in the height of fury people set fire to his door and began advancing for entering, when Marwán ibn al-Hakam, Sa`íd ibn al-`Ás and Mughírah ibn al-Akhnas together with their contingents pounced upon the besiegers and killing and bloodshed started at his door. People wanted to enter the house but they were being pushed back. In the meanwhile, `Amr ibn Hazm al-Ansárí whose house was adjacent to that of `Uthmán opened his door and shouted for advancing from that side. Thus through this house the besiegers climbed on the roof of `Uthmán's house and descending down from there drew their swords. Only a few scuffles had taken place when all except people of `Uthmán's house, his well-wishers and Banú Umayyah ran away in the streets of Medina and a few hid themselves in the house of Umm Habíbah bint Abí Sufyán (Mu`áwiyah's sister) the rest were killed with `Uthmán defending him to the last. (*at-Tabaqát*, Ibn Sa`d, vol. 3, Part 1, pp. 50-58; at-Tabarí, vol. 1, pp. 2998-3025; *al-Kámil*, Ibn al-Athír, vol. 3, pp. 167-180; Ibn Abi'l-hadíd, vol. 2, pp. 144-161).

At his killing several poets wrote elegies. A couplet from the elegy by Abú Hurayrah is presented:

Today people have only one grief but I have two griefs - the loss of my money bag and the killing of `Uthmán.

After observing these events the stand of Amír al-mu'minín becomes clear, namely that he was neither supporting the group that was instigating at `Uthmán's killing nor can be included in those who stood for his support and defence but when he saw that what was said was not acted upon he kept himself aloof.

When both the parties are looked at then among the people who had raised their hands off from `Uthmán's support are seen `Á'ishah, and according to the popular versions (which is not right) the then living persons out of the ten Pre-informed ones (who had been pre-informed in this world by the Prophet for their being admitted in Paradise), out of those who took part in the consultative committee (formed for `Uthmán's selection for Caliphate), *ansár*, original *muhájirún*, people who took part in the battle of Badr and other conspicuous and dignified individuals, while on the side (of Uthmán) are seen only a few slaves of the Caliph and a few individuals from Banú Umayyah. If people like Marwán and Sa`íd ibn al-`ÁS cannot be given precedence over the original *muhájirún* their actions too cannot be given precedence over the actions of the latter. Again, if *ijmá`* (consensus of opinion) is not meant for particular occasions only then it would be difficult to question this overwhelming unanimity of the companions.

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SERMON 31

When before the commencement of the Battle of Jamal Amír

al-mu'minín sent `Abdulláh ibn `Abbás to az-Zubayr ibn al-`Awwám with the purpose that he should advise him back to obedience, he said to him on that occasion:

Do not meet Talhah (ibn `Ubaydilláh). If you meet him you will find him like an unruly bull whose horns are turned towards its ears. He rides a ferocious riding beast and says it has been tamed. But you meet az-Zubayr because he is soft-tempered. Tell him that your maternal cousin says that, "(It looks as if) in the Hijáz you knew me (accepted me), but (on coming here to) Iraq you do not know me (do not accept me). So, what has dissuaded (you) from what was shown (by you previously)?!"

as-Sayyid ar-Radí says: The last sentence of this sermon *"famá `adá mimmá badá"* has been heard only from Amír al-mu'minín.

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SERMON 32

About the disparagement of the world and categories of its people

O' people! we have been borne in such a wrongful and thankless period wherein the virtuous is deemed vicious and the oppressor goes on advancing in his excess. We do not make use of what we know and do not discover what we do not know. We do not fear calamity till it befalls.

People are of four categories. Among them is one who is prevented from mischief only by his low position, lack of means and paucity of wealth.

Then there is he who has drawn his sword, openly commits mischief, has collected his horsemen and foot-men and has devoted himself to securing wealth, leading troops, rising on the pulpit and has allowed his faith to perish. How bad is the transaction that you allow (enjoyment of) this world to be a price for yourself as an alternative for what there is with Alláh for you.

And among them is he who seeks (benefits of) this world through actions meant for the next world, but does not seek (good of) the next world through actions of this world. He keeps his body calm (in dignity), raises small steps, holds up his clothes, embellishes his body for appearance of trust-worthiness and uses the position of Alláh's connivance as a means of committing sins.

Then there is one whose weakness and lack of means have held him back from conquest of lands. This keeps down his position and he has named it contentment and he clothes himself with the robe of renunciation although he has never had any connection with these qualities.

Then there remain a few people in whose case the remembrance of their return (to Alláh on Doomsday) keeps their eyes bent, and the fear of resurrection moves their tears. Some of them are scared away (from the world) and dispersed; some are frightened and subdued; some are quiet as if muzzled; some are praying sincerely, some are grief-stricken and pain-ridden whom fear has confined to namelessness and disgrace has shrouded them, so they are in (the sea of) bitter water, their mouths are closed and their hearts are bruised. They preached till they were tired, they were oppressed till they were disgraced and they were killed till they remained few in number.

The world in your eyes should be smaller than the bark of acacia and the clippings of wool. Seek instruction from those who preceded you before those who follow you take instruction from you, and keep aloof from it realising its evil because it cuts off even from those who were more attached to it than you.

as-Sayyid ar-Radí says: Some ignorant persons attributed this sermon to Mu`áwiyah but it is the speech of Amír al-mu'minín. There should be no doubt about it. What comparison is there between gold and clay or sweet and bitter water. This has been pointed out by the skilful guide and the expert critic `Amr ibn Bahr al-Jáhiz as he has mentioned this sermon in his book, *al-Bayán wa't-tabyín* (vol. 2, pp. 59-61). He has also mentioned who attributed it to Mu`áwiyah and then states that it is most akin to be the speech of `Alí and most in accord with his way of categorising people and information about their oppression, disgrace, apprehension and fear. (On the other hand) we never found Mu`áwiyah speaking on the lives of renunciates or worshippers .

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SERMON 33

`Abdulláh ibn `Abbás says that when Amír al-mu'minín set out for war with the people of Basrah he came to his audience at Dhíqár and saw that he was stitching his shoe.
Then Amír al-mu'minín said to me, "What is the price of this shoe?" I said:
"It has no value now." He then said, "By Alláh, it should have been more dear to me than ruling over you but for the fact that I may establish right and ward off wrong." Then he came out and spoke:

Verily, Alláh sent Muhammad (p.b.u.h.a.h.p.) when none among the Arabs read a book or claimed prophethood. He guided the people till he took them to their (correct) position and their salvation. So their spears (i.e. officers) became straight and their conditions settled down.

By Alláh, surely I was in their lead till it took shape with its walls. I did not show weakness or cowardice. My existing march is also like that. I shall certainly pierce the wrong till right comes out of its side.

What (cause of conflict) is there between me and the Quraysh? By Alláh, I have fought them when they were unbelievers and I shall fight them when they have been misled. I shall be the same for them today as I was for them yesterday.

By Alláh, the Quraysh only take revenge against us because Alláh has given us (i.e. the Holy Prophet and his progeny) preference over them. So, we have allowed them into our domain, whereupon they have become as the former poet says:

By my life, you continued drinking fresh milk every morning,
And (continued) eating fine stoned dates with butter;
We have given you the nobility which you did not possess before;
And surrounded (protected) you with thoroughbred horses and tawny-coloured spears (strong spears) (1).

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(1). In fact, the aim of the poet here is to say that the condition of the addressee's life, from the moral and material point of view, had been worse in the past, and that the poet and his tribe have given him the best means of leading their lives. But as the result of this improved condition the addressee has completely lost himself and forgotten his past condition and thinks that he had had this kind of life previously.

Now, Amír al-mu'minín wants to convey the same idea here to the Quraysh as Fatimah (p.b.u.h.) the holy daughter of the Holy Prophet said in her speech on Fadak:

> (O' People) ... *You were on the brink of the pit of Hell Fire* (Qur'án, 3:103). You were as worthless as the mouthful of water. You were minority like the handful greedy and a spark of the hasty. You were as down-trodden as the dust under feet. You drank dirty water. You ate untanned skin. You were abased and condemned. But Alláh has rescued you through my father Muhammad (p.b.u.h.a.h.p.). . .

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SERMON 34

To prepare the people for fighting with the people of Syria (ash-Shám)(1) Amír al-mu'minín said:

Woe to you. I am tired of rebuking you. Do you accept this worldly life in place of the next life? Or disgrace in place of dignity? When I invite you to fight your enemy your eyes revolve as though you are in the clutches of death, and in the senselessness of last moments. My pleadings are not understood by you and you remain stunned. It is as though your hearts are affected with madness so that you do not understand. You have lost my confidence for good. Neither are you a support for me to lean upon, nor a means to honour and victory. Your example is that of the camels whose protector has disappeared, so that if they are collected from one side they disperse away from the other side.

By Alláh, how bad are you for igniting flames of war. You are intrigued against but do not intrigue (against the enemy). Your boundaries are decreasing but you do not get enraged over it. Those against you do not sleep but you are unmindful. By Alláh, those who leave matters one for the other are subdued. By Alláh, I believed about you that if battle rages and death hovers around you, you will cut away from the son of Abí Tálib like the severing of head from the trunk. (2)

By Alláh, he who makes it possible for his adversary to so overpower him as to remove the flesh (from his bones), crush his bones and cut his skin into pieces, then it means that his helplessness is great and his heart surrounded within the sides of his chest is weak. You may become like this if you wish. But for me, before I allow it I shall use my sharp edged swords of al-Mushrafiyyah which would cut as under the bones of the head and fly away arms and feet. Thereafter, Alláh will do whatever He wills.

O' people, I have a right over you and you have a right over me. As for your right over me, that is to counsel you, to pay you your dues fully, to teach you that you may not remain ignorant and instruct you in behaviourism that you may act upon. As for my right over you, it is fulfilment of (the obligation of) allegiance, well-wishing in presence or in absence, response when I call you and obedience when I order you.

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(1). The word "ash-Shám" was a name used for a vast geographical area occupied by Muslim countries in those days. This area included present-day Syria, Lebanon and Palestine. Its capital was Damascus. Wherever the word Syria is mentioned (in this book) it should be understood in its larger meaning.

(2). This sentence is employed for such severance after which there is no occasion or possibility of joining. The author of *Durrah Najafiyyah* has quoted several views in its explanation:

i) Ibn Durayd's view is that it means that. "Just as when the head is severed its joining again is impossible, in the same way you will not join me after once deserting me."

ii) al-Mufa__al says *ar-ra's* (head) was the name of a man, and a village of Syria, Bayt ar-ra's is named after him. This man left his home and went away somewhere and never again returned to his village after which the proverb sprang up "you went as *ar-ra's* had gone."

iii) One meaning of it is that "Just as if the joints of the bones of the head are opened they cannot be restored, in the same way you will not join me after cutting from me.

iv) It has also been said that this sentence is in the sense of separating completely. After copying this meaning from the *Sharh* of ash-Shaykh Qutbu'd-Dín ar-Ráwandí, the commentator Ibn Abi'l-hadíd has written that this meaning is not correct because when the word *"ar-ra's"* is used in the sense of whole it is not preceded by *"alif"* and *"lám"*

v) It is also taken to mean that "You will so run away from me as one (fleeing for life) to save his head." Besides this, one or two other meanings have also been stated but being remote they are disregarded.

First of all it was used by the philosopher of Arabia Aktham ibn Sayfí while teaching unity and concord to his children. He says:

O’ my children do not cut away (from each other) at the time of calamities like the cutting of head, because after that you will never get together.

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SERMON 35

Amír al-mu'minín said after Arbitration. (1)

All praise is due to Alláh even though time has brought (for us) crushing calamity and great occurrence. And I stand witness that there is no god but Alláh the One, there is no partner for Him nor is there with Him any god other than Himself, and that Muhammad is His slave and His Prophet (May Alláh's blessing and greeting be upon him and his progeny).

So now, certainly the disobedience of sympathetic counsellor who has knowledge as well as experience brings about disappointment and result in repentance. I had given you my orders about this arbitration and put before you my hidden view, if Qasír's (2) orders were fulfilled but you rejected it (my orders) like rough opponents and disobedient insurgents till the counsellor himself fell in doubt about his counsel and the flint (of his wit) ceased to give flame. Consequently, mine and your position became as the poet of Hawázin says:

I gave you my orders at Mun`araji'l-liwá but you did not see the good of my counsel till the noon of next day (when it was too late) . (3)

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(1). When the Syrians' spirit was broken by the bloody swords of the Iraqis, and the incessant attacks of the night of al-harír lowered their morale and ended their aspirations `Amr ibn al-`ÁS suggested to Mu`áwiyah the trick that the Qur'án should be raised on spears and shouts urged forth to treat it as the arbitrator. Its effect would be that some people would try to stop the war and others would like to continue it. We would thus divide them and be able to get the war postponed for another occasion. Consequently, copies of the Qur'án were raised on spears. The result was that some brainless persons raised hue and cry and created division and disturbance in the army and the efforts of simple Muslims turned slow after having been near victory. Without understanding anything they began to shout that they should prefer the verdict of the Qur'án over war.

When Amír al-mu'minín saw the Qur'án being the instrument of their activities, he said:

"O' people do not fall in this trap of deceit and trickery. They are putting up this device only to escape the ignominy of defeat. I know the character of each one of them. They are neither adherents of the Qur'án nor have they any connection with the faith or religion. The very purpose of our fighting has been that they should follow the Qur'án and act on its injunctions. For Alláh's sake do not fall in their deceitful device. Go ahead with determination and courage and stop only after vanquishing the dying foe." Nevertheless, the deceitful instrument of wrong had worked. The people took to disobedience and rebellion. Mis`ar ibn Fadakí at-Tamímí and Zayd ibn Husayn at-Tá'í each with twenty thousand men came forward and said to Amír al-mu'minín, 'O' `Alí, if you do not respond to the call of the Qur'án we will deal with you in the same manner as we did with `Uthmán. You end the battle at once and bow before the verdict of the Qur'án. Amír al-mu'minín tried his best to make them understand but Satan was standing before them in the garb of the Qur'án. He did not allow them to do so, and they compelled Amír al-mu'minín that he should send someone to call Málik ibn al-hárith al-Ashtar from the battlefield. Being obliged, Amír al-mu'minín sent Yazíd ibn Hání to call Málik back. When Málik heard this order he was bewildered and said, "Please tell him this is not the occasion to leave the position. He may wait a bit then I will come to his audience with the tidings of victory." Hání conveyed this message on return but people shouted that Amír al-mu'minín must have sent word to him secretly to continue. Amír al-mu'minín said he never got any occasion to send any secret message to him. Whatever he said was said before them. People said he should be sent again and that if Málik delayed his return Amír al-mu'minín should forsake his life. Amír al-mu'minín again sent Yazíd ibn Hání and sent word that rebellion had occurred, he should return in whatever condition he was. So Hání went and told Málik "You hold victory dear or the life of Amír al-mu'minín. If his life is dear you should raise hands off the battle and go to him." Leaving the chances of victory Málik stood up and came to the audience of Amír al-mu'minín with grief and disappointment. Chaos raged there. He rebuked the people very much but matters had taken such a turn that could not be corrected.

It was then settled that either party should nominate an arbitrator so that they should settle the (matter of) Caliphate according to the Qur'án. From Mu`áwiyah's side `Amr ibn al-`ÁS was decided upon and from Amír al mu'minín's side people proposed the name of Abú Músá al-Ash`arí. Seeing this wrong selection Amír al-mu'minín said, "Since you have not accepted my order about arbitration at least now agree that do not make Abú Músá the arbitrator.

He is not a man of trust. Here is `Abdulláh ibn `Abbás and here is Málik al-Ashtar. Select one of them." But they did not at all listen to him and stuck to his name. Amír al-mu'minín said, "All right, do whatever you want. The day is not far when you will cut your own hands through your misdeeds."

After the nomination of arbitrators when the deed of agreement was being written, then with `Alí ibn Abí Tálib (p.b.u.h.) the word Amír al-mu'minín was also written. `Amr ibn al-`ÁS said, "This should be rubbed off. If we regarded him Amír al-mu'minín why should this battle have been fought?" At first Amír al-mu'minín refused to rub it off but when they did not in any way agree, he rubbed it off and said, "This incident is just similar to the one at al-hudaybiyah when the unbelievers stuck on the point that the words 'Prophet of Alláh' with the name of the Prophet should be removed and the Prophet did remove it." On this `Amr ibn al-`ÁS got angry and said, "Do you treat us as unbelievers?" Amír al-mu'minín said, "On what day have you had anything to do with believers and when have you been their supporters?" However, after this settlement, the people dispersed, and after mutual consultation these two arbitrators decided that by removing both `Alí and Mu`áwiyah from the Caliphate the people should be accorded the power to choose whomever they desired. When time came to its announcement there was a meeting at Dumatu'l-Jandal, a place between Iraq and Syria, and then two arbitrators also reached there to announce the judgement on the fate of the Muslims. Acting cunningly `Amr ibn al-`ÁS said to Abú Músá, "I regard it ill manner to precede you. You are older in years and age so first you make the announcement." Abú Músá succumbed to his flattery and came out proudly and stood before the gathering. Addressing them he said, "O' Muslims we have jointly settled that `Alí ibn Abí Tálib and Mu`áwiyah should be removed and the right to choose a Caliph be accorded to the Muslims. They should choose whomever they like." Saying this he sat down. Now the turn was for `Amr ibn al-`ÁS and he said, "O' Muslims you have heard that Abú Músá removed `Alí ibn Abí Tálib. I also agree with it. As for Mu`áwiyah, there is no question of removing him. Therefore I place him in his position." No sooner that he said this there were cries all round. Abú Músá cried hoarse that it was a trick, a deceit and told `Amr ibn al-`ÁS that, "You have played a trick, and your example is that of a dog on which if you load something he would gasp, or leave him he would gasp." `Amr ibn al-`ÁS said, "Your example is like the ass on whom books are loaded." However `Amr ibn al-`ÁS's trick was effective and Mu`áwiyah's shaking feet were again stabilised. This was the short sketch of the Arbitration whose basis was laid in the Qur'án and *sunnah*. But was it a verdict of the Qur'án or the result of those deceitful contrivances which people of this world employ to retain their authority? Could these pages of history be made a torch-guide for the future and the Qur'án and *sunnah* be not used as a means of securing authority or as an instrument of worldly benefits.

When Amír al-mu'minín got the news of this lamentable result of arbitration, he climbed on the pulpit and delivered this sermon every word of which savours of his grief and sorrow and at the same time it throws light on soundness of his thinking, correctness of his opinion and foresighted sagacity.

(2). This is a proverb which is used on an occasion where the advice of a counsellor is rejected and afterwards it is repented. The fact of it was that the ruler of al-hírah namely Jadhímah al-Abrash killed the ruler of al-Jazírah named `Amr ibn |arib whereafter his daughter az-Zabbá' was made the ruler of al-Jazírah. Soon after accession to the throne she thought out this plan to avenge her father's blood, that she sent a message to Jadhímah that she could not alone carry on the affairs of the state and that if he could become her patron by accepting her as his wife she would be grateful. Jadhímah was more than puffed up at this proposal, and prepared himself to set off for al-Jazírah with a thousand horsemen. His slave Qasír advised him much that this was just a deceit and trick and that he should not place himself in this danger; but his wit had been so blinded that he could not think over why az-Zabbá' should select the Murderer of her father for her life companionship. Anyhow, he set off and when he reached the border of al-Jazírah although az-Zabbá's army was present for his reception but she neither gave any special reception nor offered any warm welcome. Seeing this state Qasír was again suspicious and he advised Jadhímah to get back, but nearness to the goal had further fanned his passion. He paid no heed and stepping further entered the city. Soon on arrival there he was killed. When Qasír saw this he said, "Had the advice of Qasír been followed." From that time this proverb gained currency.

(3). The poet of Hawázin implies Durayd ibn as-Simmah. He wrote this couplet after the death of his brother `Abdulláh ibn as-Simmah. Its facts are that `Abdulláh along with his brother led an attack of two groups of Banú Jusham and Baní Nasr who were both from Hawázin, and drove away many camels. On return when they intended to rest at Mun`araji'l-liwá, Durayd said it was not advisable to stay there lest the enemy attacks from behind, but `Abdulláh did not agree and stayed there. The result was that as soon as dawn appeared the enemy attacked and killed `Abdulláh on the spot. Durayd also received wounds but he slipped away alive, and after this he wrote a few couplets out of which one couplet is this wherein he has referred to the destruction resulting from his advice having been rejected.

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SERMON 36

Warning the people of Nahrawán (1) of their fate

I am warning you that you will be killed on the bend of this canal and on the level of this low area while you will have no clear excuse before Alláh nor any open authority with you. You have come out of your houses and then divine decree entangled you. I had advised you against this arbitration but you rejected my advice like adversaries and opponents till I turned my ideas in the direction of your wishes. You are a group whose heads are devoid of wit and intelligence. May you have no father! (Alláh's woe be to you!) I have not put you in any calamity nor wished you harm.

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(1). The cause of the battle of Nahrawán was that when after Arbitration Amír al-mu'minín was returning to Kúfah, the people who were foremost in pleading acceptance of Arbitration began to say that appointment of anyone other than Alláh as arbitrator is heresy, and that, Alláh forbid, by accepting the Arbitration Amír al-mu'minín turned heretic. Consequently, by distorting the meaning of "There is no authority same with Alláh" they made simple Muslims share their views and separating from Amír al-mu'minín encamped at Hanírá' near Kúfah. When Amír al-mu'minín learned of these plottings he sent Sa`sa`ah ibn Súhán al-`Abdí and Ziyád ibn an-Nadr al-hárithí in the company of Ibn `Abbás towards them and afterwards himself went to the place of their stay and dispersed them after discussion.

When these people reached Kúfah they began to spread the news that Amír al-mu'minín had broken the agreement of Arbitration and that he is again ready to fight against the Syrians. When Amír al-mu'minín learned this he contradicted it whereupon these people stood up in rebellion and encamped twelve miles from Baghdad in the low area of the canal called Nahrawán.

On the other side, after hearing the verdict of Arbitration Amír al-mu'minín rose for fighting the army of Syria and wrote to the Khárijites that the verdict passed by the two arbitrators in pursuance of their heart's wishes instead of the Qur'án and *sunnah* was not acceptable to him, that he had therefore decided to fight with them and they should support him for crushing the enemy. But the Khárijites gave him this reply, "When you had agreed to Arbitration in our view you had turned heretic. Now if you admit your heresy and offer repentance we will think over this matter and decide what we should do." Amír al-mu'minín understood from their reply that their disobedience and misguidance had become very serious. To entertain any kind of hope from them now was futile. Consequently, ignoring them he encamped in the valley of an-Nukhaylah with a view to marching towards Syria. When the army had been arrayed he came to know that the men desired to deal with the people of Nahrawán first, and to move towards Syria afterwards. Amír al-mu'minín, however, said that they should be left as they were, that they themselves should first move towards Syria while the people of Nahrawán could be dealt with afterwards. People said that they were prepared to obey every order of his with all their might whether he moved this way or that way. The army had not moved when news about the rebellion of Khárijites began to reach, and it was learnt that they had butchered the governor of Nahrawán namely `Abdulláh ibn Khabbáb ibn al-Aratt and his slave maid with the child in her womb, and have killed three women of Banú Tayyí and Umm Sinán as-Saydáwiyyah. Amír al-mu'minín sent al-hárith ibn Murrah al-`Abdí for investigation but he too was killed by them. When their rebellion reached this stage it was necessary to deal with them. Consequently, the army turned towards Nahrawán. On reaching there Amír al-mu'minín sent them word that those who had killed `Abdulláh ibn Khabbáb ibn al-Aratt and innocent women should be handed over to him for avenging blood. Those people replied that they had killed these persons jointly and that they considered it lawful to shed the blood of all the people on his side. Even at this Amír al-mu'minín did not take the initiative for the battle, but sent Abú Ayyúb al-Ansárí with a message of peace. So he spoke to them aloud, "Whoever comes under this banner or separates from that party and goes to Kúfah or al-Madá'in would get amnesty and he would not be questioned. As a result of this Farwah ibn Nawfal al-Ashja'í said that he did not know why they were at war with Amír al-mu'minín. Saying this he separated along with five hundred men. Similarly group after group began to separate and some of them joined Amír al-mu'minín. Those who remained numbered four thousand, and according to at-Tabarí's account they numbered two thousand eight hundred. These people were not in any way prepared to listen to the voice of truth, and were ready to kill or be killed. Amír al-mu'minín had stopped his men to take the initiative but the Khárijites put arrows in their bows and broke and threw away the sheathes of their swords. Even at this juncture Amír al-mu'minín warned them of the dire consequences of war and this sermon is about that warning and admonition. But they were so brimming with enthusiasm that they leapt on Amír al-mu'minín's force all of a sudden. This onslaught was so severe that the foot men lost ground but they soon fixed themselves firmly that the attack of arrows and spears could not dislodge them from their position and they soon so cleared away the Khárijites that except for nine persons who fled away to save their

lives not a single person was left alive. From Amír al-mu'minín's army only eight persons fell as martyrs. The battle took place on the 9th Safar, 38 A.H.

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SERMON 37

Amír al-mu'minín's utterance which runs like a Sermon

About his own steadfastness in religion and precedence in (acceptance of) belief.

I discharged duties when others lost courage (to do so), and I came forward when others hid themselves. I spoke when others remained mum. I stroke with Divine light when others remained standing. I was the quietest of them in voice but the highest in going forward. I cleaved to its rein and applied myself solely to its pledge, like the mountain which neither sweeping wind could move nor storm could shake. No one could find fault with me nor could any speaker speak ill of me.

The low is in my view worthy of honour till I secure (his) right for him while the strong is in my view weak till I take (other's) right from him. We are happy with the destiny ordained by Alláh and have submitted to the command of Alláh. Do you think I would speak lie about the Prophet of Alláh? By Alláh, I am surely the first to testify him, so I will not be the first to falsify him. I looked at my affairs and found that my obedience should have precedence over my allegiance while my pledge with him is a burden on my neck.

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SERMON 38

About naming of doubt as such and disparagement of those in doubt

Doubt is named doubt because it resembles truth. As for lovers of Alláh, their conviction serves them as light and the direction of the right path (itself) serves as their guide; while the enemies of Alláh, in time of doubt call to misguidance in the darkness of doubt and their guide is blindness (of intelligence). One who fears death cannot escape it nor can one who fears for eternal life secure it.

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SERMON 39

In disparagement of those who shrink from fighting

I am faced with men who do not obey when I order and do not respond when I call them. May you have no father! (Woe to you!) What are you waiting for to rise for the cause of Alláh? Does not faith join you together, or sense of shame rouse you? I stand among you shouting and I am calling you for help, but you do not listen to my word, and do not obey my orders, till circumstances show out their bad consequences. No blood can be avenged through you and no purpose can be achieved with you. I called you for help of your brethren but made noises like the camel having pain in stomach, and became loose like the camel of thin back. Then a wavering weak contingent came to me from amongst you: "*as if they are being led to death and they are only watching*." (1) (Qur'án, 8:6)

as-Sayyid ar-Radí says: Amír al-mu'minín's word "*mutadhá'ib*" means "*mutharib*" (i.e. moved or troubled), as they say "*tadhá'abat ar-ríh*" (i.e. the winds blow in troubled manner). Similarly the wolf is called "*dhi'b*" because of its troubled movement.

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(1). Mu`áwiyah sent a contingent of two thousand soldiers under an-Nu`mán ibn Bashír to assault `Aynu't-Tamr. This place was a defence base of Amír al-mu'minín near Kúfah whose incharge was Málik ibn Ka`b al-Arhabí. Although there were a thousand combatants under him, but at the moment only hundred men were present there. When Málik noticed the offensive force advancing he wrote to Amír al-mu'minín for help. When Amír al-mu'minín received the message he asked the people for his help but only three hundred men got ready as a result of which Amír al-mu'minín was much disgusted and delivered this sermon in their admonition. When Amír al-mu'minín reached his house after delivering the sermon `Adí ibn Hátim at-Tá'í came and said, "O' Amír al-mu'minín a thousand men of Banú Tayyi' are under me. If you say I shall send them off." Amír al-mu'minín said, "It does not look nice that people of one tribe only should meet the enemy. You prepare your force in the Valley of an-Nukhaylah." Accordingly he went there and called people to *jihád*, when besides Banú Tayyi' one thousand other combatants also assembled. They were still preparing to set off when word reached from Málik ibn Ka`b that there was no need for help as he had repulsed the enemy.

The reason of this was that Málik had sent off `Abdulláh ibn Hawálah al-Azdí hastily to Qarazah ibn Ka`b al-Ansárí and Mikhnaf ibn Sulaym al-Azdí so that if there was delay in the arrival of support from Kúfah he could get help from here in time. `Abdulláh went to both, but got no help from Qara~ah. However, Mikhnaf ibn Sulaym got ready fifty persons under `Abd ar-Rahmán ibn Mikhnaf and they reached there near evening. Upto that time the two thousand men (of the enemy) had not been able to subdue the hundred men of Málik. When an-Nu`mán saw these fifty men he thought that their forces had started coming in so he fled away from the battlefield. Even in their retreat Málik attacked them from rear and killed three of their men.

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SERMON 40

When Amír al-mu'minín heard the cry of Khárijites that "Verdict is only that of Alláh" he said:

The sentence is right but what (they think) it means, is wrong. It is true that verdict lies but with Alláh, but these people say that (the function of) governance is only for Alláh. The fact is that there is no escape for men from ruler good or bad. The faithful persons perform (good) acts in his rule while the unfaithful enjoys (worldly) benefits in it. During the rule, Alláh would carry everything to end. Through the ruler tax is collected, enemy is fought, roadways are protected and the right of the weak is taken from the strong till the virtuous enjoys peace and allowed protection from (the oppression of) the wicked.

Another version:

When Amír al-mu'minín heard the cry of the Khárijites on the said verdict he said:

I am expecting the verdict (destiny) of Alláh on you.

Then he continued:

As for good government the pious man performs good acts in it, while in a bad government the wicked person enjoys till his time is over and death overtakes him.

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SERMON 41

In condemnation of treason

O' people! Surely fulfilment of pledge is the twin of truth. I do not know a better shield (against the assaults of sin) than it. One who realises the reality of return (to the next world) never betrays. We are in a period when most of the people regard betrayal as wisdom. In these days the ignorants call it excellence of cunning. What is the matter with them? Alláh may destroy them. One who has been through thick and thin of life finds the excuses to be preventing him from orders and prohibitions of Alláh but he disregards them despite capability (to succumb to them and follows the commands of Alláh), while one who has no restraints of religion seizes the opportunity (and accepts the excuses for not following the commands of Alláh).

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SERMON 42

About heart’s desires and extended hopes

O’ people what I fear most about you are two things - acting according to desires and extending of hopes. As regards acting according to desires, this prevents from truth; and as regards extending of hopes, it makes one forget the next world. You should know this world is moving rapidly and nothing has remained out of it except last particles like the dregs of a vessel which has been emptied by someone. Beware, the next world is advancing, and either of them has sons i.e. followers. You should become sons of the next world and not become sons of this world because on the Day of Judgement every son would cling to his mother. Today is the Day of action and there is no reckoning while tomorrow is the Day of reckoning but there would be no (opportunity for) action.

as-Sayyid ar-Radí says: “*al-hadhdhá’* “ means rapid but some people have read it “*jadhdhá’* “. According to this version the meaning would be that the cycle of worldly enjoyments would end soon.

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SERMON 43

After Amír al-mu'minín had sent Jarír ibn `Abdilláh al-Bajalí to Mu`áwiyah

(for securing his allegiance) some of his companions suggested preparation to fight with him then he said:

My preparation for war with the people of Syria (ash-Shám) while Jarír ibn `Abdilláh al-Bajalí is still there would be closing the door for Syria and prevention of its people from good action (i.e. allegiance) if they intend doing it. However, I have fixed a time limit for Jarír after which he would not stay without either deception or in disobedience. My opinion is in favour of patience, so wait a while. (In the meantime) I do not dislike your getting ready.

I have observed this matter thoroughly from all sides but I do not find any way except war or heresy. Certainly, there was over the people a ruler (before me) who brought about new (un-Islamic) things and compelled the people to speak out. So they did speak, then rose up and thereafter changed the whole system.

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SERMON 44

When Masqalah (1) ibn Hubayrah ash-Shaybáni fled to Mu`áwiyah

because he had purchased some prisoners of Banú Nájiyah from an executive of Amír al-mu'minín, but when he demanded the price the latter avoided and ran to Syria, Amír al-mu'minín said:

Alláh may be bad to Masqalah. He acted like the noble but fled away like a slave. Before his admirer could speak (about him) he silenced him and before his eulogist could testify to his good deeds he closed his mouth. If he had stayed behind we would have taken from him what he could easily pay and waited for the balance till his money increased.

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(1). When after Arbitration the Khárijites rose, a man of Baní Nájiyah from them named al-Khirrít ibn Ráshid an-Nájí stood up for instigating people and set off towards al-Madá'in with a group killing and marauding. Amír al-mu'minín sent Ziyád ibn Khasafah with three hundred men to check him. When the two forces met at al-Madá'in they attacked each other with swords. Only one encounter or so had taken place when the gloom of evening prevailed and the battle had to be stopped. When morning appeared Ziyád's men noticed that five dead bodies of the Khárijites were lying and they themselves had cleared off the battlefield. Seeing this Ziyád set off for Basrah along with his men. There he came to know that the Khárijites had gone to Ahwáz. Ziyád did not move onwards for paucity of force and informed Amír al-mu'minín of it. Amír al-mu'minín called back Ziyád and sent Ma`qil ibn Qays ar-Riyáh'í with two thousand experienced combatants towards Ahwáz and wrote to the governor of Basrah `Abdulláh ibn `Abbás to send two thousand swordsmen of Basrah for the help of Ma`qil. Consequently, the contingent from Basrah also joined them at Ahwáz and after proper organisation they got ready for attacking the enemy. But al-Khirrít marched on along with his men to the hills of Rámhurmuz. These people also followed him and overtook him near these hills. Both arrayed their forces and started attacking each other. The result of this encounter was also that three hundred and seventy Khárijites were killed in the battlefield while the rest ran away. Ma`qil informed Amír al-mu'minín of his performance and of the enemy's running away when Amír al-mu'minín directed him to chase them and so to shatter their power that they should not be able to raise heads again. On receipt of this order he moved on and overtook him on the coast of the Persian gulf where al-Khirrít had by persuasion secured the co-operation of the people and enlisting men from here and there, had collected a considerable force. When Ma`qil reached there, he raised the flag of peace and announced that those who had collected from here and there should get away. They would not be molested. The effect of this announcement was that save for his own community all others deserted him. He organised those very men and commenced the battle but valorous combatants of Basrah and Kúfah displayed such excellent use of swords that in a short time one hundred and seventy men of the insurgents were killed while an-Nu`mán ibn Suhbán ar-Rásib'i encountered al-Khirrít (ibn Ráshid an-Nájí) and eventually felled him and killed him. Soon upon his fall the enemy lost ground and they fled away from the battlefield. Thereafter Ma`qil collected all the men, women and children from their camps at one place. From among them those who were Muslims were released after swearing of allegiance. Those who had turned heretics were called upon to resume Islam. Consequently except one old Christian all others secured release by accepting Islam and this old man was killed. Then he took with him those Christians of Baní Nájiyah who had taken part in this revolt together with their families. When Ma`qil reached Ardashír Khurrah (a city of Iran) these prisoners wailed and cried, before its governor Masqalah ibn Hubayrah ash-Shaybání and beseeched humiliatively to do something for their release. Masqalah sent word to Ma`qil through Dhuhl ibn al-hárith to sell these prisoners to him. Ma`qil agreed and sold those prisoners to him for five hundred thousand Dirhams and told him to dispatch the price immediately to Amír al-mu'minín. He said that he was sending the first instalment at once and the remaining instalments would also be sent soon. When Ma`qil met Amír al-mu'minín he related the whole event before him. Amír al-mu'minín ratified this action and waited for the price for some time, but Masqalah observed such deep silence as if nothing was due from him. At last Amír al-mu'minín sent a messenger to him and sent him word to either send the price or to come himself. On Amír al-mu'minín's order he came to Kúfah and on demand of the price paid two hundred thousand Dirhams but to evade the balance went away to Mu`áwiyah's who made him the governor of Tabarastán. When Amír al-mu'minín came to know all this he spoke these words (as in this sermon). Its sum total is that, "If he had stayed we would have been considerate to him in demanding the price and would have waited for improvement of his financial condition, but he fled away like slaves after displaying a showy act. Talk about his high perseverance had just started when people began to discuss his baseless and lowliness."

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SERMON 45

About Alláh's greatness and lowliness of this world

Praise is due to Alláh from Whose mercy no one loses hope, from Whose bounty no one is deprived, from Whose forgiveness no one is disappointed and for Whose worship no one is too high. His mercy never ceases and His bounty is never missed.

This world is a place for which destruction is ordained and for its inhabitants departure from here is destined. It is sweet and green. It hastens towards its seeker and attaches to the heart of the viewer. So depart from here with the best of provision available with you and do not ask herein more than what is enough and do not demand from it more than subsistence.

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SERMON 46

When Amír al-mu'minín decided to march towards Syria (ash-Shám) he spoke these words:

My Alláh, I seek Thy protection from the hardships of journey, from the grief of returning and from the scene of devastation of property and men. O' Alláh, Thou art the companion in journey and Thou art one who is left behind for (protection of the) family. None except Thee can join these two because one who is left behind cannot be a companion in journey nor one who is in company on a journey can at the same time be left behind.

as-Sayyid ar-Radí says: The earlier part of this sermon is related from the Prophet but Amír al-mu'minín has completed it very aptly by adding most eloquent sentences at the end. This addition is from "None except Thee can join" upto the end.

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SERMON 47

About calamities befalling Kúfah

O’ Kúfah, as though I see you being drawn like the tanned leather of `Ukā~í (1) in the market, you are being scraped by calamities and being ridden by severe troubles. I certainly (2) know that if any tyrant intends evil for you Alláh will afflict him with worry and fling him with a killer (set someone on him to kill him).

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(1). During pre-Islamic days a market used to be organised every year near Mecca. Its name was `Ukáz where mostly hides were traded as a result of which leather was attributed to it. Besides sale and purchase literary meetings were also arranged and Arabs used to attract admiration by reciting their works. After Islam, because of the better congregation in the shape of *Hajj* this market went down.

(2). This prophecy of Amír al-mu’minín was fulfilled word by word and the world saw how the people who had committed tyranny and oppression on the strength of their masterly power had to face tragic end and what ways of their destruction were engendered by their blood-shedding and homicidal activities. Consequently, the end of Ziyád ibn Abíh (son of unknown father) was that when he intended to deliver a speech for vilification of Amír al-mu’minín suddenly paralysis overtook him and he could not get out of his bed thereafter. The end of the bloodshed perpetrated by `Ubaydulláh ibn Ziyád was that he fell a prey to leprosy and eventually blood thirsty swords put him to death. The ferocity of al-Hajjáj ibn Yúsuf ath-Thaqafí drove him to the fate that snakes cropped up in his stomach as a result of which he died after severe pain. `Umar ibn Hubayrah al-Fazárí died of leucoderma. Khálid ibn `Abdilláh al-Qasrí suffered the hardships of prison and was killed in a very bad way. Mus`ab ibn az-Zubayr and Yazíd ibn al-Muhallab ibn Abí Sufrah were also killed by swords.

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SERMON 48

Delivered at the time of marching towards Syria.

Praise is due to Alláh when night spreads and darkens, and praise be to Alláh whenever the star shines and sets. And praise be to Alláh whose bounty never misses and whose favours cannot be repaid.

Well, I have sent forward my vanguard (1) and have ordered them to remain in camp on this bank of the River till my order reaches them. My intention is that I should cross this water over to the small habitation of people residing on the sides of the Tigris and rouse them to march with you towards the enemy and keep them as auxiliary force for you.

as-Sayyid ar-Radí says: Here by "*mitát* " Amír al-mu'minín has meant the direction where he had ordered the men to camp and that was the bank of the Euphrates, and "*mitát* " is used for the bank of a river although its literal meaning is level ground whereas by "*nutfah* " he means the water of the Euphrates, and these are amazing expressions.

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(1). Amír al-mu'minín delivered this sermon when he camped at the Valley of an-Nukhaylah on Wednesday the 5th Shawwál 37 A.H. on his way to Siffín. The Vanguard mentioned herein means the twelve thousand persons whom he had sent towards Siffín under the command of Ziyád ibn an-Nadr and Shurayh ibn Hání, while the small force of al-Madá'in mentioned by him was a contingent of twelve hundred men who had come up in response to Amír al-mu'minín's call.

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SERMON 49

About Alláh's greatness and sublimity

Praise be to Alláh Who lies inside all hidden things, and towards Whom all open things guide. He cannot be seen by the eye of an onlooker, but the eye which does not see Him cannot deny Him while the mind that proves His existence cannot perceive Him. He is so high in sublimity that nothing can be more sublime than He, while in nearness, He is so near that no one can be nearer than He. But his sublimity does not put Him at a distance from anything of His creation, nor does His nearness bring them on equal level to Him. He has not informed (human) wit about the limits of His qualities. Nevertheless, He has not prevented it from securing essential knowledge of Him. So he is such that all signs of existence stand witness for Him till the denying mind also believes in Him. Alláh is sublime beyond what is described by those who liken Him to things or those who deny Him.

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SERMON 50

Admixture of right and wrong

The basis of the occurrence of evils are those desires which are acted upon and the orders that are innovated. They are against the Book of Alláh. People co-operate with each other about them even though it is against the Religion of Alláh. If wrong had been pure and unmixed it would not be hidden from those who are in search of it. And if right had been pure without admixture of wrong those who bear hatred towards it would have been silenced. What is, however, done is that something is taken from here and something from there and the two are mixed! At this stage Satan overpowers his friends and they alone escape for whom virtue has been apportioned by Alláh from before.

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SERMON 51

When in Siffín the men of Mu`áwiyah overpowered the men of Amír al-mu'minín

and occupied the bank of River Euphrates and prevented them from taking its water, Amír al-mu'minín said:

They(1) are asking you morsels of battle. So either you remain in ignominy and the lowest position or drench your swords with blood and quench your thirst with water. Real death is in the life of subjugation while real life is in dying as subjugators. Beware, Mu`áwiyah is leading a small group of insurgents and has kept them in dark about the true facts with the result that they have made their bosoms the targets of death.

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(1). Amír al-mu'minín had not reached Siffín when Mu`áwiyah posted forty thousand men on the bank of the River to close the way to the watering place, so that none except the Syrians could take the water. When Amír al-mu'mimín's force alighted there they found that there was no watering place except this one for them to take water. If there was one it was difficult to reach there by crossing high hillocks. Amír al-mu'minín sent Sa`sa`ah ibn Súhán al-`Abdí to Mu`áwiyah with the request to raise the control over water. Mu`áwiyah refused. On this side Amír al-mu'minín's army was troubled by thirst. When Amír al-mu'minín noticed this position he said, "Get up and secure water by dint of sword." Consequently, these thirsty persons drew their swords out of sheaths, put arrows in their bows and dispersing Mu`áwiyah's men went right down into the River and then hit these guards away and occupied the watering place themselves.

Now, Amír al-mu'minín's men also desired that just as Mu`áwiyah had put restriction on water by occupation of the watering place, the same treatment should be accorded to him and his men and no Syrian should be allowed water and everyone of them should be made to die of thirst. But Amír al-mu'minín said, "Do you want to take the same brutal step which these Syrians had taken? Never prevent anyone from water. Whoever wants to drink, may drink and whoever wants to take away may take away." Consequently, despite occupation of the River by Amír al-mu'minín's army no one was prevented from the water and everyone was given full liberty to take water.

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SERMON 52

(This sermon has already appeared earlier but due to the difference between the two versions we have quoted it again here).

Its subject is the downfall of the world and reward and punishment in the next world.

Beware, the world is wrapping itself up and has announced its departure. Its known things have become strangers and it is speedily moving backward. It is advancing its inhabitants towards destruction and driving its neighbours towards death. Its sweet things (enjoyments) have become sour, and its clear things have become polluted. Consequently, what has remained of it is just like the remaining water in a vessel or a mouthful of water in the measure. If a thirsty person drinks it his thirst is not quenched.

O' creatures of Alláh get ready to go out of this world for whose inhabitants decay is ordained, and (beware) heart's wishes should overpower you, nor should you take your stay (in life) to be long. By Alláh, if you cry like the she-camel that has lost its young one, call out like the cooing of pigeons, make noise like devoted recluses and turn to Alláh leaving your wealth and children as a means to secure His nearness and high position with Him or the forgiveness of sins which have been covered by His books and recorded by His angels it would be less than His reward that I expect for you or His retribution that I fear about you.

By Alláh, if your hearts melt down thoroughly and your eyes shed tears of blood either in hope for Him or for fear from Him and you are also allowed to live in this world all the time that it lasts even then your actions cannot pay for His great bounties over you and His having guided you towards faith.

A part of the same sermon on the description of the Day of Sacrifice (`Íd al-Adhá) and the qualities of the animal for sacrifice

For an animal to be fully fit for sacrifice it is necessary that both its ears should be raised upwards and its eyes should be healthy. If the ears and the eyes are sound the animal of sacrifice is sound and perfect, even though its horn be broken or it drags its feet to the place of sacrifice.

as-Sayyid ar-Radí says: Here place of sacrifice means place of slaughter.

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SERMON 53

On the swearing of allegiance

They leapt upon me as the camels leap upon each other on their arrival for drinking water, having been let loose after unfastening of their four legs till I thought they would either kill me or kill one another in front of me. I thought over this matter in and out to the extent that it prevented me from sleeping. But I found no way except to fight them or else to reject whatever has been brought by Muhammad (PBUHAHP). I found that to face war was easier for me than to face the retribution, and the hardships of this world were easier than the hardships of the next world.

*****

SERMON 54

When Amír al-mu'minín's men showed impatience on his delay in giving them permission to fight in Siffín , he said:

Well, as for your idea whether this (delay) is due to my unwillingness for death, then by Alláh I do not care whether I proceed towards death or death advances towards me. As for your impression that it may be due to my misgivings about the people of Syria (ash-Sham) ,well by Alláh, I did not put off war even for a day except in the hope that some group may join me, find guidance through me and see my light with their weak eyes. This is dearer to me than to kill them in the state of their misguidance although they would be bearing their own sins.

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SERMON 56

Amír al-mu’minín said to his companions about Mu`áwiyah

Soon after me there would be put on you a man with a broad mouth and a big belly. He would swallow whatever he gets and would crave for what he does not get. You should kill him but (I know) you would not kill him. He would command you to abuse me and to renounce me. As for abusing, you do abuse me because that would mean purification for me and salvation for you. As regards renunciation, you should not renounce me because I have been born on the natural religion (Islam) and was foremost in accepting it as well as in Hijrah (migrating from Mecca to Medina). (1)

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(1). About the person to whom Amír al-mu’minín has alluded in this sermon some people hold that he is Ziyád ibn Abíh; some hold that he is al-Hajjáj ibn Yúsuf ath-Thaqafí and some hold that he is Mughírah ibn Shu`bah. But most of the commentators have held him to be Mu`áwiyah and this is correct because the qualities that Amír al-mu’minín has described prove true fully on him alone. Thus Ibn Abi’l-hadíd has written about the gluttonous quality of Mu`áwiyah that once the prophet sent for him and he was informed that Mu`áwiyah was busy eating. Then a second and third time a man was sent to call him but he brought the same news. Thereupon the Prophet said , “May Alláh never satisfy his belly.” The effect of this curse was that when he felt tired of eating he would say , “Take away, for, by Alláh I am not satiated but I am tired and disgusted.” Similarly, his abusing Amír al-mu’minín and ordering his officers for it are such accepted facts of history about which there is no scope of denying. In this connection such words were used on the pulpit that even Alláh and the Prophet were hit by them. Thus, Umm al-mu’minín Umm Salamah wrote to Mu`áwiyah, “Certainly you people abuse Alláh and the Prophet, and this is like this that you hurl abuses on `Alí and those who love him, while I do stand witness that Alláh and the Prophet did love him.” *(al-`Iqd al-Faríd, Vol. 3, p. 131)*

Thanks to `Umar ibn `Abdil-`Azíz who put a stop to it, and introduced the following verse in place of abuse in the sermons:

> *Verily Alláh enjoineth justice and benevolence* (to others) *and giving unto the kindred, and forbidden lewdness, and evil, and rebellion; He exhorteth you that ye may take heed* (Qur’án 16:90)

In this sermon Amír al-mu’minín has ordered his killing on the basis of the Prophet’s order that “When you (O’ Muslims) see Mu`áwiyah on my pulpit, kill him.” (*Kitáb Siffín,* pp. 243, 248; *Sharh* of Ibn Abi’l-hadíd, Vol. 1, p.348; *Ta’ríkh Baghdád*, Vol. 12, p. 181; *Mízán al-I`tidál*, Vol. 2, p. 128; *Tahdhíb at-tahdhíb*, Vol. 2, p. 428; Vol. 5, p. 110; Vol. 7, p. 324)

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SERMON 57

Addressing the Khárijites, Amír al-mu'minín said:

Storm may overtake you while there may be none to prick you (for reforms). Shall I be witness to my becoming heretic after acceptance of Faith and fighting in the company of the Prophet*?! "In that case I shall be misguided and I shall not be on the right path."* (Qur'án, 6:56). So you should return to your evil places, and get back on the traces of your heels. Beware! Certainly you will meet, after me, overwhelming disgrace and sharp sword and tradition that will be adopted by the oppressors as a norm towards you. (1)

As-Sayyid ar-Radí says: In the *words "wala baqiyah minkum ábirun"* used by Amír al-mu'minín the *"ábir"* has been related with *"bá'"* and *"rá'"* and it has been taken from the Arab saying *"rajulun ábirun"* which means the man who prunes the date-palm trees and improves them. In one version the word is *"áthir"* and its meaning is "relator of good news." In my view this is more appropriate, as though Amír al-mu'minín intends to say that there should remain none to carry news. In one version the word appears as *"ábiz"* with *"zá'"* which means one who leaps. One who dies is also called *"ábiz"*.

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(1). History corroborates that after Amír al-mu'minín, the Khárijites had to face all sorts of ignominy and disgrace and wherever they raised their heads for creating trouble, they were met with swords and spears. Thus Ziyád ibn Abíh, \`Ubaydulláh ibn Ziyád, al-Hajjáj ibn Yúsuf, Mus\`ab ibn az-Zubayr and al-Muhallab ibn Abí Sufrah left no stone unturned in annihilating them from the surface of the globe, particularly al-Muhallab chased them for nineteen years, routed them thoroughly and rested only after completing their destruction.

AT-Tabarí writes that when ten thousand Khárijites collected in *Sillá wa sillibrá* (the name of a mountain in Ahwáz) then al-Muhallab faced them so steadfastly that he killed seven thousand Khárijites, while the remaining three thousand fled towards Kirmán for life. But when the Governor of Persia noticed their rebellious activities he surrounded them in Sábúr and killed a good number of them then and there. Those remained again fled to Isfahán and Kirmán. From there they again formed a contingent and advanced towards Kúfah via Basrah. Al-hárith ibn Abí Rabí\`ah al-Makhzúmí and \`Abd ar-Rahmán ibn Mikhnaf al-Azdí stood up with six thousand combatants to stop their advance, and turned them out of Iraq's boundaries. In this way successive encounters completely trampled their military power and turning them out of cities compelled them to roam about in the deserts. Afterwards also, when they rose in the form of groups they were crushed. (*at-Ta'ríkh*, Vol. 2, pp. 580-591); Ibn al-Athír, Vol. 4, pp. 196-206).

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SERMON 58

When Amír al-mu'minín showed his intention to fight the Khárijites

he was told that they had crossed the bridge of Nahrawán and gone over to the other side. Amír al-mu'minín said:

Their falling place is on this side of the river. By Alláh, not even ten of them will survive while from your side not even ten will be killed. (1)

As-Sayyid ar-Radí says: In this sermon *"nutfah"* implies the River Euphrates, and for water this is the nicest expression, even though water may be much.

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(1) This prophecy cannot be attributed to wit and farsightedness, because farsighted eyes may forecast victory or defeat and preconceive the outcome of war but to tell about the correct figures of the killed on either side is beyond their capacity. This can be done only by one who can unveil the unknown future and see the coming scene with his eyes and who sees the sketches yet to appear on the page of the future with the help of the light of knowledge possessed by him as Imám.

Consequently, events occurred just according to what this inheritor of the Prophet's knowledge had said, and from among the Khárijites all except nine persons were killed. Two of them fled away to `Umán, two to Sijistán, two to Kirmán and two to al-Jazírah while one escaped to Tall Mawzan. Of Amír al-mu'minín's party only eight men fell as martyrs.

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SERMON 59

When Amír al-mu'minín was told that the Khárijites had been totally killed, he said:

By Alláh, no, not yet. They still exist in the loins of men and wombs of women. Whenever a chief would appear from among them, he would be cut down till the last of them would turn thieves and robbers. (1)

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(1) This prophecy of Amír al-mu'minín also proved true word by word. Every chief of Khárijites who rose was put to sword. A few of their chiefs who were badly put to death are mentioned here:

1) Náfi` ibn Azraq al-Hanafí: the largest group of the Khárijites namely al-Azáriqah is named after him. He was killed by Salámah al-Báhilí during encounter with the army of Muslim ibn `Ubays.

2) Najdah ibn `Ámir: the an-Najadát al-`Ádhiriyyah sect of Khárijites is named after him. Abú Fudayk al-Khárijí got him killed.

3) `Abdulláh ibn Ibá_ at-Tamímí: the sect Ibá_ite (Ibá_iyyah) is named after him. He was killed during encounter with `Abdulláh ibn Muhammad ibn `ATiyyah.

4) Abú Bayhas Haysam ibn Jábir a_-¬uba`í: the sect of al-Bayhasiyyah is named after him. `Uthmán ibn Hayyán al-Murrí the governor of Medina got his hands and feet severed and then killed him.

5) `Urwah ibn Udayyah at-Tamímí: Ziyád ibn Abíh killed him during the reign of Mu`áwiyah.

6) Qatarí ibn al-Fujá'h al-Máziní at-Tamímí: when he encountered the army of Sufyán ibn al-Abrad al-Kalbí in Tabarastán then Sawrah ibn al-hurr ad-Dárimí killed him.

7) Abú Bilál Mirdás ibn Udayyah at-Tamímí: was killed in encounter with `Abbás ibn Akh_ar al-Máziní.

8) Shawdhab al-Khárijí al-Yashkurí: was killed during encounter with Sa`íd ibn `Amr al-harashí.

9) hawtharah ibn Wadá` al-Asadí: was killed at the hands of a man of Banú Tayyi'

10) al-Mustawrid ibn `Ullafah at-Taymí: was killed by Ma`qil ibn Qays ar-Riyáhí in the reign of Mu`áwiyah.

11) Shabíb ibn Yazíd ash-Shaybání: died by being drowned in river.

12) `Imrán ibn al-hárith ar-Rásibí: was killed in the battle of Dúláb.

13, 14) Zahháf at-Tá'í and Qurayb ibn Murrah al-Azdí: were killed in encounter with Banú Táhiyah.

15) az-Zubayr ibn `Alí as-Salítí at-Tamímí: was killed in encounter with `Attáb ibn Warqá' ar-Riyáhí.

16) `Alí ibn Bashír ibn al-Máhúz al-Yarbú`í: al-Hajjáj ibn Yúsuf ath-Thaqafí got him killed.

17) `Ubaydulláh ibn Bashír: was killed in encounter with al-Muhallab ibn Abí Sufrah in the battle of Dúláb.

18) Abú'l-Wázi` ar-Rásibí: a man in the graveyard of Banú Yashkur felled a wall on him and killed him.

19) `Abdu Rabbih as-Saghír: was killed in encounter with al-Muhallab ibn Abí Sufrah.

20) Al-Walíd ibn Taríf ash-Shaybání: was killed in encounter with Yazíd ibn Mazyad ash-Shaybání.

21-24) `Abdulláh ibn Yahyá al-Kindí, al-Mukhtár ibn `Awf al-Azdí (Abú Hamzah ash-Shárí), Abrahah ibn as-Sabbáh and Balj ibn `Uqbah al-Asadí: were killed by `Abd al-Malik ibn `ATiyyah as-Sa`dí in the reign of Marwán ibn Muhammad (the last of the Umayyad caliphs).

SERMON 60

Amír al-mu'minín also said:

Do not fight(1) the Khárijites after me, because one who seeks right but does not find it, is not like one who seeks wrong and finds it.

as-Sayyid ar-Radí says: Amír al-mu'minín means Mu`áwiyah and his men.

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(1). The reason for stopping people from fighting the Khárijites was that Amír al-mu'minín was clearly perceiving that after him authority and power would devolve on people who would be ignorant of the proper occasion of *jihád*, and who will make use of sword only to maintain their sway. And there were those who excelled even Khárijites in holding and calling Amír al-mu'minín bad. So those who are themselves in the wrong have no right to fight others in the wrong. Again, those who are wilfully in the wrong can be allowed to fight those who are in the wrong by mistake. Thus, Amír al-mu'minín's words make this fact clear that the misguidance of Khárijites was not wilful but under Satan's influence. They mistook wrong as right and stuck to it. On the other hand, the position of misguidance of Mu`áwiyah and his party was that they rejected right realising it as right and appropriated wrong as the code of their conduct fully knowing that it was wrong. Their audacity in the matter of religion reached the stage that it can neither be regarded as a result of misunderstanding nor can it be covered under the garb of error of judgement, because they openly transgressed the limits of religion and paid no heed to the Prophet's injunctions in comparison with their own view. Thus, Ibn Abi'l-Hadíd has written (vol. 5, p. 130) that when the Prophet's companion Abu'd-Dardá' saw utensils of gold and silver being used by Mu`áwiyah he said he had heard the Prophet saying, "One who drinks in vessels of gold and silver will feel flames of the fire of Hell in his stomach" whereupon Mu`áwiyah said, "As for me, l do not find any harm in it." Similarly, creating Ziyád ibn Abíh's blood relationship with himself by his own opinion in total disregard of the Prophet's injunction, abusing the descendants of the Prophet over the pulpit, transgressing the limits of *sharí`ah*, shedding blood of innocent persons and placing over Muslims (as so called Khalifáh) a vicious individual and thus opening the way to disbelief and atheism are events that to attribute them to any misunderstanding is like wilfully closing eyes to facts.

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SERMON 61

When Amír al-mu'minín was warned of being killed by deceit, he said:

Surely, there is a strong shield of Alláh over me. When my day would come it would get away from me and hand me over to death. At that time neither an arrow would go amiss nor a wound would heal up.

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SERMON 62

About the transience of the world

Beware ! surely this world is a place from which protection cannot be sought except while one is in it. The action which is performed only for this world cannot secure salvation. People are tested in it through calamities. Those who have taken worldly pleasures here will be taken out from them (by death) and will be questioned about them. And whatever (good actions) they have achieved for the other world, they will get them there and stay in them. For the intelligent this world is like the shade - one moment it is spread out and extended but soon it shrinks and contracts.

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SERMON 63

About decline and destruction of the world

O’ creatures of Alláh! Fear Alláh and anticipate your death by good actions. Purchase everlasting joy by paying transitory things - pleasures of this world. Get ready for the journey, for you are being driven, and prepare yourselves for death, since it is hovering over you. Be a people who wake up when called, and who know that this world is not their abode, and so have it changed (with the next).

Certainly, Alláh has not created you aimlessly nor left you as useless. There is nothing between anyone of you and Paradise or Hell except death that must befall him. The life that is being shortened every moment and being dismantled every hour must be regarded very short. The hidden thing namely death which is being driven (to you) by two over new phenomena, the day and the night, is certainly quick of approach. The traveller which is approaching with success or failure (namely death) deserves the best of provision. So acquire such provision from this world while you are here with which you may shield yourself tomorrow (on the Day of Judgement).

So everyone should fear Alláh, should admonish himself, should send forward his repentance and should overpower his desire, because his death is hidden from him, his desires deceive him and Satan is posted on him and he beautifies for him sin so that he may commit it and prompts him to delay repentance till his desires make him the most negligent. Piety is for the negligent person whose life itself would be a proof against him and his own days (passed in sin) would lead him to punishment.

We ask Alláh, the Glorified, that He may make us and you like one whom bounty does not mislead, whom nothing can stop from obedience of Alláh and whom shame and grief do not befall after death.

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SERMON 64

About Alláh's attributes

Praise be to Alláh for Whom one condition does not proceed another so that He may be the First before being the Last or He may be Manifest before being Hidden. Everyone called one (alone) save Him is by virtue of being small (in number); and everyone enjoying honour other than Him is humble. Every powerful person other than Him is weak. Every master (owner) other than Him is slave (owned).

Every knower other than Him is seeker of knowledge. Every controller other than Him is sometimes imbued with control and sometimes with disability. Every listener other than Him is deaf to light voices while loud voices make him deaf and distant voices also get away from him. Every onlooker other than Him is blind to hidden colours and delicate bodies. Every manifest thing other than Him is hidden, but every hidden thing other than Him is incapable of becoming manifest.

He did not create what He created to fortify His authority nor for fear of the consequences of time, nor to seek help against the attack of an equal or a boastful partner or a hateful opponent. On the other hand all the creatures are reared by him and are His humbled slaves. He is not conditioned in anything so that it be said that He exists therein, nor is He separated from anything so as to be said that He is away from it. The creation of what He initiated or the administration of what He controls did not fatigue Him. No disability overtook Him against what He created. No misgiving ever occurred to Him in what He ordained and resolved. But His verdict is certain, His knowledge is definite, His governance is overwhelming. He is wished for at time of distress and He is feared even in bounty.

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SERMON 65

In some of the days of Siffín Amír al-mu'minín said to his followers about ways of fighting

O' crowd of Muslims! Make fear of Alláh the routine of your life. Cover yourselves with peace of mind and clinch your teeth because this makes the sword slip off from the skull. Complete your armour and shake your swords in their sheathes before showing them out. Have your eyes on the enemy. Use your spears on both sides and strike (the enemy) with swords. Keep in mind that you are before Alláh and in the company of the Prophet's cousin. Repeat your attacks and feel ashamed of running away, because it is a shame for posterity and (cause of awarding you) fire on the Day of Judgement. Give your lives (to Alláh) willingly and walk towards death with ease. Beware of this great majority, and the pitched tent and aim at its centre because Satan is hiding in its cornet. He has extended his hand for assault and has kept back his foot for running away. Keep one enduring till the light of Truth dawns upon you.

While ye have the upper hand, and Alláh is with you, and never will He depreciate your deeds. (Qur'án, 47:35)

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SERMON 66

When after the death of the Prophet news reached Amír al-mu'minín about the happening in Saqífah of Baní Sá`idah,(1)

he enquired what the ansár said. People said that they were asking for one chief from among them and one from the others, Amír al-mu'minín said:

Why did you not argue against them (*ansár*) that the Prophet had left his will that whoever is good among ansár should be treated well and whoever is bad he should be forgiven.

People said: "What is there against them in it?"

Amír al-mu'minín said:

"If the Government was for them there should have been no will in their favour."

Then he said:

"What did the Quraysh plead?"

People said: "They argued that they belong to the lineal tree of the Prophet.

Then Amír al-mu'minín said:

"They argued with the tree but spoiled the fruits."

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(1). From what happened in the Saqífah of Baní Sá`idah it appears that the greatest argument of *muhájirún* against *ansár* and the basis of the former's success was this very point that since they were the kith and kin of the Prophet no one else could deserve the Caliphate. On this very ground the big crowd of *ansár* became ready to lay down their weapons before three *muhájirún*, and the latter succeeded in winning the Caliphate by presenting their distinction of descent. Thus in connection with the events of Saqífah at-Tabarí writes that when the *ansár* assembled in Saqífah of Baní Sá`idah to swear allegiance on the hand of Sa`d ibn `Ubádah, somehow Abú Bakr, `Umar and Abú `Ubaydah ibn al-Jarráh also got the hint and reached there. `Umar had thought out something for this occasion and he rose to speak but Abú Bakr stopped him, and he himself stood up. After praise of Alláh and the immigration of the *muhájirún* and their precedence in Islam he said:

> They are those who worshipped Alláh first of all and accepted belief in Alláh and his Prophet's friends and his Kith and Kin. These alone therefore must deserve the Caliphate. Whoever clashes with them commits excess.

When Abu Bakr finished his speech al-hubáb ibn al-Mundhir stood up and, turning to the *ansár,* he said: "O' group of *ansár* ! Do not give your reins in the hands of others. The populace is under your care. You are men of honour, wealth and tribe and gathering. If the *muhájirún* have precedence over you in some matters you too have precedence over them in other matters. You gave them refuge in your houses. You are the fighting arm of Islam. With your help Islam stood on its own feet. In your cities prayer of Alláh was established with freedom. Save yourselves from division and dispersion and stick to your right unitedly. If the *muhájirún* do not concede to your right tell them there should be one chief from us and one from them."

No sooner al-hubáb sat down after saying this then `Umar rose and spoke thus:

This can't be that there be two rulers at one time. By Alláh, the Arabs will never agree to have you as the head of the state since the Prophet was not from amongst you. Certainly, the Arabs will not care the least objection in that the Caliphate is allowed to one in whose house Prophethood rests so that the ruler should also be from the same house. For those who dissent clear arguments can be put forth. Whoever comes in conflict with us in the matter of the authority and rulership of Muhammad (p.b.u.h.a.h.p.) he is leaning towards wrong, is a sinner and is falling into destruction.

After `Umar, al-hubáb again stood up and said to the *ansár*, “Look, stick to your point and do not pay heed to the views of this man or his supporters. They want to trample your right, if they do not consent turn him and them out of your cities and appropriate the Caliphate. Who else than you can deserve it more?”

When al-hubáb finished `Umar scolded him. There was use of bad words from that side also, and the position began to worsen. On seeing this Abú `Ubaydah ibn al-Jarráh spoke with the intention of cooling down *ansár* and to win them over to his side and said:

“O’ *ansár* ! You are the people who supported us and helped us in every manner. Do not now change your ways and do not give up your behaviour.” But the *ansár* refused to change their mind. They were prepared to swear allegiance to Sa`d and people just wanted to approach him when a man of Sa`d’s tribe Bashír ibn `Amr al-Khazrají stood up and said:

“No doubt we came forward for *jihád*, and gave support to the religion, but our aim in doing thus was to please Alláh and to obey His Prophet. It does not behove us to claim superiority and create trouble in the matter of the caliphate. Muhammad (p.b.u.h.a.h.p.) was from Quraysh and they have a greater right for it, and are more appropriate for it.” As soon as Bashír uttered these words division occurred among the *ansár*, and this was his aim, because he could not see a man of his own tribe rising so high. The *muhájirún* took the best advantage of this division among the *ansár*, and `Umar and Abú `Ubaydah decided to swear allegiance to Abú Bakr. They had just got forward for the act when Bashír first of all put his hand on that of Abú Bakr and after that `Umar and Abú `Ubaydah swore the allegiance. Then the people of Bashír’s tribe came and swore allegiance, and trampled Sa`d ibn `Ubádah under their feet.

During this time Amír al-mu’minín was occupied in the funeral bath and burial of the Prophet. When afterwards he heard about the assemblage at the Saqífah and he came to know that the *muhájirún* had won the score over *ansár* by pleading themselves to be from the tribe of the Prophet he uttered the fine sentence that then argued on the lineal tree being one but spoiled its fruits, who are the members of his family. That is, if *muhájirún’s* claim was acceded for being from the lineal tree of the Prophet, how can those who are the fruits of this tree be ignored? It is strange that Abú Bakr who connects with the Prophet in the seventh generation above and `Umar who connects with him in the ninth generation above may be held of the tribe and family of the Prophet and he who was his first cousin, he is refused the status of a brother.

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SERMON 67

When Amír al-mu'minín appointed Muhammad ibn Abí Bakr (1) Governor of Egypt

and he was overpowered and killed, Amír al-mu'minín said:

I had intended to send Háshim ibn `Utbah to Egypt and had I done so he would have made way for the opponents nor given them time (to get hold of him). This is without reproach to Muhammad ibn Abí Bakr as I loved him and had brought him up.

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(1). Muhammad ibn Abí Bakr's mother was Asmá' bint `Umays whom Amír al-mu'minín married after Abú Bakr's death. Consequently, Muhammad lived and was brought up under the care of Amír al-mu'minín and he imbibed his ways and manners. Amír al-mu'minín too loved him much and regarded him as his son, and used to say "Muhammad is my son from Abú Bakr." He was born in the journey for the last *Hajj* (of the Prophet) and died as martyr in 38 A.H. at the age of twenty eight years.

On accession to the Caliphate Amír al-mu'minín had selected Qays ibn Sa`d ibn `Ubádah as the Governor of Egypt but circumstances so developed that he had to be removed and Muhammad ibn Abí Bakr had to be sent there as Governor. The policy of Qays there was that he did not want to take any serious step against the `Uthmáni group but Muhammad's view was different. After the lapse of a month he sent them word that in case they did not obey him their existence there would be impossible. Upon this these people organised a front against him, and engaged themselves in secret wire-pullings, but became conspicuous soon. After arbitration they started creating trouble with the slogan of vengeance. This polluted the atmosphere of Egypt. When Amír al-mu'minín came to know these deteriorated conditions he gave the governorship of Egypt to Málik ibn al-hárith al-Ashtar and sent him off there in order that he might suppress insurgent elements and save the administration from getting worse, but he could not escape the evil designs of the Umayyads and was killed by poison while on his way. Thus, the governorship of Egypt remained with Muhammad ibn Abí Bakr.

On this side, the performance of `Amr ibn al-`ÁS in connection with the Arbitration made Mu`áwiyah recall his own promise. Consequently, he gave him six thousand combatants and set him off to attack Egypt. When Muhammad ibn Abí Bakr knew of the advancing force of the enemy he wrote to Amír al-mu'minín for help. Amír al-mu'minín replied that he would be soon collecting help for him but in the meantime he should mobilise his own forces. Muhammad mobilised four thousand men under his banner and divided them into two parts. He kept one part with himself and on the other he placed Kinánah ibn Bishr at-Tujíbí in command and ordered him to go forward to check the enemy's advance. When they settled down in camp before the enemy various parties of the enemy began attacking them but they faced them with courage and valour. At last Mu`áwiyah ibn Hudayj as-Sakúní al-Kindí made an assault with full force. These people did not turn away from the enemy's swords but faced them steadfastly and fell as martyrs in action. The effect of this defeat was that Muhammad ibn Abí Bakr's men got frightened and deserted him. Finding himself alone Muhammad fled away and sought refuge in a deserted place. The enemy however got news about him through someone and traced him out when he was dying with thirst. Muhammad asked for water but these cruel men refused and butchered him thirsty. Then they put his body in the belly of a dead ass and burnt it.

Málik ibn Ka`b al-Arhabí had already left Kúfah with two thousand men but before he could reach Egypt it had been occupied by the enemy.

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SERMON 68

Admonishing his companions about careless behavior Amír al-mu'minín said:

How long shall I accord you consideration that is accorded to camels with hollow hump, or to worn clothes which when stitched on one side give way on the other. Whenever a vanguard force of Syria (ash-Shám) hovers over you, everyone of you shuts his door and hides himself like the lizard in its hole or a badger it its den. By Alláh, he whom people like you support must suffer disgrace and he who throws arrows with your support is as if he throws arrows that are broken both at head and tail. By Alláh, within the courtyard you are quite numerous but under the banner you are only a few. Certainly, I know what can improve you and how your crookedness can be straightened. But I shall not improve your condition by marring myself. Alláh may disgrace your faces and destroy you. You do not understand the right as you understand the wrong and do not crush the wrong as you crush the right.

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SERMON 69

Spoken on the morning of the day when Amír al-mu'minín was fatally struck with sword.

I was sitting when sleep overtook me. I saw the Prophet of Alláh appear before me, and I said: "O' Prophet of Alláh! what crookedness and enmity I had to face from the people. " The prophet of Alláh said: "Invoke (Alláh) evil upon them," but I said, "Alláh may change them for me with better ones and change me for them with a worse one.

as-Sayyid ar-Radí says: *"al-awad"* means crookedness and *"al-ladad"* means enmity, and this is the most eloquent expression.

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SERMON 70

In condemnation of the people of Iraq

Now then, O ' people(1) of Iraq! You are like the pregnant woman who, on completion of the period of pregnancy delivers a dead child and her husband is also dead and her period of widowhood is long while only remote relation inherits her. By Alláh, I did not come to you of my own accord. I came to you by force of circumstances. I have come to know that you say `Alí speaks lie. May Alláh fight you! Against whom do I speak lie? Whether against Alláh? But I am the first to have believed in him. Whether against His Prophet? But I am the first who testified to him. Certainly not. By Alláh it was a way of expression which you failed to appreciate, and you were not capable of it. Woe to you. I am giving out these measures of nice expression free of any cost. I wish there were vessels good enough to hold them.

Certainly, you will understand it after some time. (Qur'án, 38:88)

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(1). When after Arbitration the Iraqis displayed lethargy and heartlessness in retaliating the continuous attacks of Mu`áwiyah, Amír al-mu'minín delivered this sermon abusing and admonishing them. Herein he has referred to their being deceived at Siffín and has likened them to a woman who has five qualities:

i) Firstly, she is pregnant. This implies that these people had full capability to fight, and were not like a barren woman from whom nothing is expected

ii) Secondly, she has completed the period of pregnancy. That is they had passed over all difficult stages and had approached near the final goal of victory.

iii) Thirdly, she wilfully miscarries her child. That is after coming close to victory they came down to settlement and instead of achieving the coveted goal faced disappointment.

iv) Fourthly, her period of widowhood is long. That is they fell in such a state as though they had no protector or patron and they were roaming about without any ruler.

v) Fifthly, her successors would be distant persons. That is the people of Syria who had no relationship with them would occupy their properties.

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SERMON 71

Herein Amír al-mu'minín tells people how to pronounce "as-salát" (to invoke Divine blessing) on the Prophet.

My Alláh, the Spreader of the surfaces (of earth) and Keeper (intact) of all skies, Creator of hearts on good and evil nature, send Thy choicest blessings and growing favours on Muhammad Thy servant and Thy Prophet who is the last of those who preceded (him) and an opener for what is closed, proclaimer of truth with truth, repulser of the forces of wrong and crusher of the onslaughts of misguidance. As he was burdened (with responsibility of prophethood) so he bore it standing by Thy commands, advancing towards Thy will, without shrinking of steps of weakness of determination, listening to Thy revelation, preserving Thy testament, proceeding forward in the spreading of Thy commands till he lit fire for its seeker and lighted the path for the groper in the dark.

Hearts achieved guidance through him after being ridden with troubles. He introduced clearly guiding signs and shining injunctions. He is Thy trusted trustee, the treasurer of Thy treasured knowledge, Thy witness on the Day of Judgement, Thy envoy of truth and Thy Messenger towards the people. My Alláh prepare large place for him under Thy shade and award him multiplying good by Thy bounty.

My Alláh, give height to his construction above all other constructions, heighten his position with Thee, grant perfection to his effulgence and perfect for him his light. In reward for his discharging Thy prophetship, grant him that his testimony be admitted and his speech be liked for his speech is just, and his judgements are clear-cut. My Alláh put us and him together in the pleasures of life, continuance of bounty, satisfaction of desires, enjoyment of pleasures. ease of living, peace of mind and gifts of honour.

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SERMON 72

Amír al-mu'minín said about Marwán ibn al-hakam at Basrah.

When Marwán was taken on the day of Jamal, he asked Hasan and Husayn (p.b.u.t.) to intercede on his behalf before Amír al-mu'minín. So they spoke to Amír al-mu'minín about him and he released him. Then they said, "O' Amír al-mu'minín he desires to swear you allegiance" Whereupon Amír al-mu'minín said:

Did he not swear me allegiance after the killing of `Uthmán? Now I do not need his allegiance, because his is the hand of a Jew. If he swears me allegiance with his hand he would violate it after a short while. Well, he is to get power for so long as a dog licks his nose. He is the father of four rams (who will also rule). The people will face days through him and his sons.(1)

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(1). Marwán ibn al-Hakam was the nephew (brother's son) and son-in-law of `Uthmán. Due to thin body and tall stature he was known with the nickname "Khayt Bátil" (the thread of wrong). When `Abd al-Malik ibn Marwán killed `Amr ibn Sa`íd al-Ashdaq, his brother Yahyá ibn Sa`íd said:

> O' sons of Khayt Bátil (the thread of the wrong) you have played deceit on `Amr and people like you build their houses (of authority) on deceit and treachery.

Although his father al-Hakam ibn Abí al-`ÁS had accepted Islam at the time of the fall of Mecca but his behaviour and activities were very painful to the Prophet. Consequently, the Prophet cursed him and his descendants and said, "Woe will befall my people from the progeny of this man." At last in view of his increasing intrigues the Prophet externed him from Medina towards the valley of Wajj (in Ta'if) and Marwán also went with him. Prophet did not thereafter allow them entry in Medina all his life. Abú Bakr and `Umar did likewise, but `Uthmán sent for both of them during his reign, and raised Marwán to such height as though the reins of caliphate rested in his hands. Thereafter his circumstances became so favourable that on the death of Mu`áwiyah ibn Yazíd he became the Caliph of the Muslims. But he had just ruled only for nine months and eighteen days that death overtook him in such a way that his wife sat with the pillow on his face and did not get away till he breathed his last.

The four sons to whom Amír al-mu'minín has referred were the four sons of `Abd al-Malik ibn Marwán namely al-Walíd, Sulaymán, Yazíd and Hishám, who ascended the Caliphate one after the other and coloured the pages of history with their stories. Some commentators have regarded this reference to Marwán's own sons whose names are `Abd al-Malik, `Abd al-`Azíz, Bishr and Muhammad. Out of these `Abd al-Malik did become Caliph of Islam but `Abd al-`Azíz became governor of Egypt, Bishr of Iraq and Muhammad of al-Jazírah.

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SERMON 73

When the Consultative Committee (or Shúrá) decided to swear allegiance to `Uthmán, Amír al-mu'minín said:

You have certainly known that I am the most rightful of all others for the Caliphate. By Alláh, so long as the affairs of Muslims remain intact and there is no oppression in it save on myself I shall keep quiet seeking reward for it (from Alláh) and keeping aloof from its attractions and allurements for which you aspire.

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SERMON 74

When Amír al-mu’minín learnt that the Umayyads blamed him for killing `Uthmán, he said:

Umayyads’s knowledge about me did not desist them from accusing me, nor did my precedence (in accepting Islam) keep off these ignorant people from blaming me. Alláh’s admonitions are more eloquent than my tongue. I am the contester against those who break away from Faith and the opposer of those who entertain doubts. Uncertainties should be placed before Qur’án, the Book of Alláh (for clarification). Certainly, people will be recompensed according to what they have in their hearts.

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SERMON 75

About preaching and counselling

Alláh may bless him who listens to a point of wisdom and retains it, when he is invited to the right path he approaches it, he follows a leader (by catching his waist band) and finds salvation, keeps Alláh before his eyes and fears his sins, performs actions sincerely and acts virtuously, earns treasure of heavenly rewards, avoids vice, aims at (good) objectives and reaps recompense, faces his desires and rejects (fake) hopes, makes endurance the means to his salvation and piety the provision for his death, rides on the path of honour and sticks to the highway of truth, makes good use of his time and hastens towards the end and takes with him the provision of (good) actions.

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SERMON 76

About Umayyads

The Banú Umayyah (Umayyads) are allowing me the inheritance of Muhammad (p.b.u.h.a.h.p.) bit (by bit). By Alláh, if I live I would throw them away as the butcher removes the dust from the dust-covered piece of flesh.

as-Sayyid ar-Radí says: In one version for *"al-widhámu't-taribah"* (dust covered piece of flesh) the words *"at-turábu'l-wadhimah"* (the soil sticking on a piece of flesh) have been shown. That is, for the adjective the qualified noun and for the qualified noun the adjective has been placed. Any by the word *"layufawwiqúnani"* Amír al-mu'minín implies that they allow him bit by bit just as a she-camel may be milked a little and then its young one may be made to suck milk so that it may be ready to be milked. And *"al-widhám"* is the plural of *"wadhamah"* which means the piece of stomach or of liver which falls on the ground and then the dust is removed from it.

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SERMON 77

Supplications of Amír al-mu'minín.

O' my Alláh! Forgive me what Thou knowest about me more than I do. If I return (to the sins) Thou return to forgiveness. My Alláh forgive me what I had promised to myself but Thou didst not find its fulfilment with me. My Alláh forgive me that with what I sought nearness to Thee with my tongue but my heart opposed and did not perform it. My Alláh forgive me winkings of the eye, vile utterances, desires of the heart and errors of speech.

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SERMON 78

When(1) Amír al-mu'minín decided to set out for the battle with the Khárijites

someone said, "If you set out at this moment then according to astrology I fear you will not be successful in your aim," whereupon Amír al-mu'minín said:

Do you think you can tell the hour when a man goes out and no evil befall him or can warn of the time at which if one goes out harm will accrue? Whoever testifies to this falsifies the Qur'án and becomes unmindful of Alláh in achieving his desired objective and in warding off the undesirable. You cherish saying this so that he who acts on what you say should praise you rather than Alláh because according to your misconception you have guided him about the hour in which he would secure benefit and avoid harm.

Then Amír al-mu'minín advanced towards the people and said:

O' People! Beware of learning the science of stars except that with which guidance is sought on land or sea, because it leads to divining and an astrologer is a diviner, while the diviner is like the sorcerer, the sorcerer is like the unbeliever and the unbeliever would be in Hell. Get forward in the name of Alláh.

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(1). When Amír al-mu'minín decided to march towards Nahrawán to suppress the rising of the Khárijites, `Afif ibn Qays al-Kindí said to him, "This hour is not good. If you set out at this time. then instead of victory and success you will face defeat and vanquishment." But Amír al-mu'minín paid no heed to his view and ordered the army to march that very moment. In the result the Khárijites suffered such a clear defeat that out of their nine thousand combatants only nine individuals saved their lives by running away while the rest were killed.

Amír al-mu'minín has argued about astrology being wrong or incorrect in three ways, firstly, that if the view of an astrologer is accepted as correct it would mean falsification of the Qur'án, because an astrologer claims to ascertain hidden things of the future by seeing the stars while the Qur'án says:

Say: "None (either) in the heavens or in the earth knoweth the unseen save Alláh... " (27:65)

Secondly that under his misconception the astrologer believes that he can know his benefit or harm through knowing the future. In that case he would be regardless of turning to Alláh and seeking His help, while this indifference towards Alláh and self-reliance is a sort of heresy and atheism, which puts an end to his hope in Alláh. Thirdly, that if he succeeds in any objective, he would regard this success to be the result of his knowledge of astrology, as a result of which he would praise himself rather than Alláh, and will expect that whomever he guides in this manner he too should be grateful to him rather than to Alláh . These points do not apply to astrology to the extent it may be believed that the astrological findings are in the nature of effect of medicines which are subject to alteration at the will of Alláh. The competence achieved by most of our religious scholars in astrology is correct in this very ground that they did not regard its findings as
final.

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SERMON 79

After the Battle of Jamal,(1) Concerning Women and Their Shortcomings.

O' ye peoples! Women are deficient in Faith, deficient in shares and deficient in intelligence. As regards the deficiency in their Faith, it is their abstention from prayers and fasting during their menstrual period. As regards deficiency in their intelligence it is because the evidence of two women is equal to that of one man. As for the deficiency of their shares that is because of their share in inheritance being half of men. So beware of the evils of women. Be on your guard even from those of them who are (reportedly) good. Do not obey them even in good things so that they may not attract you to evils.

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(1). Amír al-mu'minín delivered this sermon after the devastation created by the Battle of Jamal. Since the devastation resulting from this battle was the outcome of blindly following a woman's command, in this sermon he has described women's physical defects and their causes and effects. Thus their first weakness is that for a few days in every month they have to abstain from prayer and fasting, and this abstention from worship is a proof of their deficiency in Faith. Although the real meaning of *`ímán* (belief) is heart-felt testimony and inner conviction yet metaphorically it also applies to action and character. Since actions are the reflection of Belief they are also regarded as part of Belief. Thus, it is related from Imám `Alí ibn Músá ar-Ri_á (p.b.u.t.) that:

`ímán (belief) is testimony at heart, admission by the tongue and action by the limbs.

The second weakness is that their natural propensities do not admit of full performance of their intelligence. Therefore, nature has given them the power of intelligence only in accordance with the scope of their activities which can guide them in pregnancy, delivery, child nursing, child care and house-hold affairs. On the basis of this weakness of mind and intelligence their evidence has not been accorded the status of man's evidence, as Alláh says:

. . . then call to witness two witnesses from among your men and if there not be two men then (take) *a man and two women, of those ye approve of the witnesses, so that should one of the two* (women) *forget the* (second) *one of the two may remind the other...* (Qur'án, 2:282)

The third weakness is that their share in inheritance is half of man's share in inheritance as the Qur'án says:

Alláh enjoineth you about your children. The male shall have the equal of the shares of two females...(4:11)

This shows woman's weakness because the reason for her share in inheritance being half is that the liability of her maintenance rests on man. When man's position is that of a maintainer and care taker the status of the weaker sex who is in need of maintenance and care-taking is evident.

After describing their natural weakness, Amír al-mu'minín points out the mischief of blindly following them and wrongly obeying them. He says that not to say of bad things but even if they say in regard to some good things it should not be done in a way that these should feel as if it is being done in pursuance of their wish, but rather in a way that they should realise that the good act has been performed because of its being good and that their pleasure or wish has nothing to do with it. If they have even the doubt that their pleasures has been kept in view in it they would slowly increase in their demands and would wish that they should be obeyed in all matters however evil, the inevitable consequence whereof will be destruction and ruin. ash-Shaykh Muhammad `Abduh writes about this view of Amír al-mu'minín as under:

Amír al-mu'minín has said a thing which is corroborated by experiences of centuries.

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SERMON 80

About the way of preaching and counselling

O' people! abstinence is to shorten desires, to thank for bounties and to keep off prohibitions. If this is possible then (at least) the prohibitions should not overpower your patience. Alláh has exhausted the excuse before you through clear, shining arguments and open, bright books.

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SERMON 81

About the world and its people

In what way shall I describe this world whose beginning is grief and whose end is destruction?(1) The lawful actions performed here have to be accounted for, while for the forbidden ones there is punishment. Whoever is rich here faces mischief and whoever is poor gets grief. One who hankers after it does not get it. If one keeps away from it then it advances towards him. If one sees through it, it would bestow him sight, but if one has his eye on it then it would blind him.

as-Sayyid ar-Radí says: If a thinker thinks over this phrase of Amír al-mu'minín "*waman absara bihá bassarat'hu"* ("If one sees through it, it would bestow him sight") he would find thereunder very amazing meaning and far-reaching sense whose purpose cannot be appreciated and whose aim cannot be understood particularly when he joins it with Amír al-mu'minín's phrase *"waman absara ilayhá a`mat'hu"* ("If one, has his eye on it, them it would blind him) he would find the difference between *"absara bihá"* and *"absara lahá",* clear, bright, wonderful and shining.

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(1). "The beginning of the world is grief and its end is destruction." This sentence contains the same truth which the Qur'án has presented in the verse:

Indeed We have created man (to dwell) *amidst hardship*. (90:4)

It is true that right from the narrow womb of the mother upto the vastness of the firmament the changes of human life do not come to an end. When man first tastes life he finds himself closed in such a dark prison where he can neither move the limbs nor change the sides. When he gets rid of this confinement and steps in this world he has to pass through innumerable troubles. In the beginning he can neither speak with the tongue so as to describe his difficulty or pain nor possesses energy in the limbs so as to accomplish his needs himself. Only his suppressed sobs and flowing tears express his needs and translate his grief and sorrow. When after the lapse of this period he enters the stage of learning and instruction, then on every step voices of admonition and abuse welcome him. All the time he seems frightened and terrified. When he is relieved of this period of subjugation he finds himself surrounded by the worries of family life and livelihood, where sometimes, there is clash with comrades in profession, sometimes collision with enemies, sometimes confrontation with vicissitudes of time, sometimes attack of ailments and sometimes shock of children, till old age approaches him with the tidings of helplessness and weakness, and eventually he bids farewell to this world with mortification and grief in the heart.

Thereafter Amír al-mu'minín says about this world, that in its lawful actions there is the question of reckoning and in its forbidden acts there are hardships of punishment, as a result of which even pleasant joys also produce bitterness in his palate. If there is plenty of wealth and money in this world then man finds himself in such a whirlpool (of worries) that he loses his joy and peace of mind. But if there is want and poverty, he is ever crying for wealth. He who hankers after this world there is no limit for his desires. If one wish is fulfilled the desire for fulfilment of another wish crops up. This world is like the reflection. If you run after it then it will itself run forward but if you leave it and run away from it then it follows you. In the same way, if a person does not run after the world, the world runs after him. The implication is that if a person breaks the clutches of greed and avarice and keeps aloof from undesirable hankering after the world, he too gets (pleasures of) the world and he does not remain deprived of it. Therefore, he who surveys this world from above its surface and takes lesson from its chances and happenings, and through its variation, and alterations gains knowledge about Alláh's Might, Wisdom and Sagacity, Mercy, Clemency and Sustaining power, his eyes will gain real brightness and sight. On the other hand the person who is lost only in the colourfulness of the world and its decorations, he loses himself in the darkness of the world that is why Alláh has forbidden to view the world thus:

And strain not thine eyes unto that which We have provided (different) *parties of them,* (of) *the splendour of the life of this world, so that We may try them in it; for the provision of thy Lord is better and more abiding.* (Qur'án, 20:131)

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SERMON 82

This sermon is called the al-Gharrá' and it is one of the most wonderful sermons of Amír al-mu'minín.

Praise be to Alláh who is High above all else, and is Near (the creation) through His bounty. He is the Giver of all reward and distinction, and Dispeller of all calamities and hardships. I praise Him for His continuous mercy and His copious bounties.

I believe in Him as He is the First of all and He is Manifest. I seek guidance from Him as He is Near and is the Guide. I seek His succour as He is Mighty and Subduer. I depend upon Him as He is Sufficer and Supporter. And I stand witness that Muhammad (blessing of Alláh be on him and his progeny) is His slave and His Prophet. He sent him for enforcement of His commands, for exhausting His pleas and for presenting warnings (against eternal punishment).

Enjoining people to Piety

O' creatures of Alláh I advise you to have fear of Alláh Who has furnished illustrations and Who has timed for you your lives. He has given you covering of dress(1) and He has scattered for you livelihood. He has surrounded you with His knowledge. He has ordained rewards. He has bestowed upon you vast bounties and extensive gifts. He has warned you through far reaching arguments, and He has counted you by numbers. He has fixed for you ages (to live) in this place of test and house of instruction.

You are on test in this world and have to render account about it.

Caution against this world

Certainly this world is a dirty watering place and a muddy source of drinking.

Its appearance is attractive and its inside is destructive. It is a deception, a vanishing reflection and a bent pillar. When its despiser begins to like it and he who is not acquainted with it feels satisfied with it, then it raises and puts down its feet (in joy), entraps him in its trap, makes him the target of its arrows and puts round his neck the rope of death taking him to the narrow grave and fearful abode in order to show him his place of stay and the recompense of his acts. This goes on from generation to generation. Neither death stops from cutting them asunder nor do the survivors keep aloof from committing of sins.

Death and Resurrection

They are emulating each other and proceeding in groups towards the final objective and the rendezvous of death, till when matters come to a close, the world dies and resurrection draws near. Alláh(2) would take them out from the corners of the graves, the nests of birds. the dens of beasts and the centres of death. They hasten towards Him command and run towards the place fixed for their final return group by group, quiet, standing and arrayed in rows. They will be within Alláh's sight and will hear every one who would call them.

They would be having the dress of helplessness and covering of submission and indignity. (At this time) contrivances would disappear, desires would be cut, hearts would sink quietly, voices would be curbed down, sweat would choke the throat, fear would increase and ears would resound with the thundering voice of the announcer calling towards the final judgement, award of recompense, striking of punishment and paying of reward.

The limitations of life

People have been created as a proof of (His) power, have been brought up with authority, they are made to die through pangs, and placed in graves where they turn into crumbs. Then they would be resurrected one by one, awarded their recompense and would have to account for their actions, each one separately. They had been allowed time to seek deliverance, had been shown the right path and had been allowed to live and seek favours, the darkness of doubts had been removed, and they had been let free in this period of life as a training place in order to make preparation for the race on the Day of Judgement, to search for the objective with thoughtfulness, to get time necessary to secure benefits and provide for the next place of stay.

No happiness without Piety

How appropriate are these illustrations and effective admonitions provided they are received by pure hearts, open ears, firm views and sharp wits. Fear Alláh like him who listened (good advice) and bowed before it, when he committed sin he admitted it, when he felt fear he acted virtuously, when he apprehended he hastened (towards good acts), when he believed he performed virtuous acts, when he was asked to take lesson (from the happenings of this world) he did take the lesson, when he was asked to desist he abstained (from evil), when he responded to the call (of Alláh) he leaned (towards him), when he turned back (to evil) he repented, when he followed he almost imitated and when he was shown (the right path) he saw it.

Such a man was busy in search of truth and got rid (of the worldly evils) by running away. He collected provision (of good acts) for himself, purified his inner self, built for the next world, and took with himself provision for the day of his departure, keeping in view his journey, his requirement and the position of his need. He sent ahead of him for the abode of his stay (in the next world). O' creatures of Alláh, fear Alláh keeping in view the reason why He created you and be afraid of Him to the extent He has advised you to do. Make yourself deserve what He has promised you, by having confidence in the truth of His promise and entertaining fear for the Day of Judgement.

A part of the same sermon
Reminding people of Alláh's bounties

He has made for you ears to preserve what is important, eyes to have sight in place of blindness and limbs which consist of many (smaller) parts, whose curves are in proportion with the moulding of their shapes and lengths of their ages, and also bodies that are sustaining themselves and hearts that are busy in search of their food, besides other big bounties, obliging bestowings and fortresses of safety. He has fixed for you ages that are not known to you. He has retained for you remains of the past people for your instruction. Those people enjoyed themselves fully and were completely unhampered. Death overtook them before (satisfaction of) their desires, from which the hands of death separated them. They did not provide for themselves during health of their bodies, and did not take lesson during their youth.

Are these people who are in youth waiting for the backbending old age, and those enjoying fresh health waiting for ailments, and these living persons looking for the hour of death? When the hour of departure would be close and the journey at hand, with pangs of grief and trouble, suffering of sorrows and suffocation of saliva, and the time would arrive for calling relations and friends for help and changing sides on the bed. Could then the near ones stop death, or the mourning women do any good? He would rather be left alone in the graveyard confined to the narrow corner of his grave.

His skin has been pierced all over by reptiles, and his freshness has been destroyed by these tribulations. Storms have removed his traces and calamities have obliterated even his signs. Fresh bodies have turned thin and withered and bones have become rotten. The spirits are burdened with the weight of sins and have become conscious of the unknown things. But now neither the good acts can be added to nor evil acts can be atoned for by repentance. Are you not sons, fathers, brothers and relations of these dead and are not to follow their footsteps and pass by their paths? But hearts are still unmoved, heedless of guidance and moving on wrong lines, as though the addressee is someone else, and as though the correct way is to amass worldly gains.

Preparation for the Day of Judgement

And know that you have to pass over the pathway (of Sirát) where steps waver, feet slip away and there are fearful dangers at every step. O' creatures of Alláh, fear Alláh, like the fearing of wise man whom the thought (of next world) has turned away from other matters, fear (of Alláh) has afflicted his body with trouble and pain, his engagement in the night prayer has turned even his short sleep into awakening, hope (of eternal recompense) keeps him thirsty in the day, abstention has curbed his desires, and remembrance of Alláh is ever moving his tongue. He entertains fear before dangers. He avoids uneven ways in favour of clear ones. He follows the shortest route to secure his purpose, wishfulness does not twist his thinking and ambiguities do not blind his eyes. He enjoys deep sleep and passes his day happily because of the happiness of good tidings and pleasure of (eternal bounties).

He passes the pathway of this world in praiseworthy manner. He reaches the next world with virtues. He hastens (towards virtue) out of fear (for vice). He moves briskly during the short time (of life in this world). He devotes himself in seeking (eternal good), he runs away from evil. During today he is mindful of tomorrow, and keeps the future in his view. Certainly Paradise is the best reward and achievement, which hell is appropriate punishment and suffering. Alláh is the best Avenger and Helper and the Qur'án is the best argument and confronter.

Warning against Satan

I enjoin upon you fear of Alláh Who has left no excuse against what He has warned, has exhausted argument (of guidance) about the (right) path He has shown. He has warned you of the enemy that steals into hearts and stealthily speaks into ears, and thereby misguides and brings about destruction, makes (false) promises and keeps under wrong impression, he represents evil sins in attractive shape, and shows as light even serious crimes. When he has deceived his comrades and exhausted the pledge he begins to find fault with what he presented as good, and considers serious what he had shown as light, and threatens from what he had shown as safe.

Part of the same sermon dealing with creation of man

Or look at man whom Alláh has created in the dark wombs and layers of curtains from what was overflowing semen, then shapeless clot, then embryo, then suckling infant, then child and then fully grown up young man. Then He gave him heart with memory, tongue to talk and eye to see with, in order that he may take lesson (from whatever is around him) and understand it and follow the admonition and abstain from evil.

When he attained the normal growth and his structure gained its average development he fell in self-conceit and got perplexed. He drew bucketfuls of his desires, got immersed in fulfilling his wishes for pleasures of the world and his (sordid) aims. He did not fear any evil nor got frightened of any apprehension. He died infatuated with his vices. He spent his short life in rubbish pursuits. He earned no reward nor did he fulfil any obligation. Fatal illness overtook him while he was still in his enjoyments and perplexed him. He passed the night in wakefulness in the hardships of grief and pricking of pains and ailments in the presence of real brother, loving father, wailing mother, crying sister, while he himself was under maddening uneasiness, serious senselessness, fearful cries, suffocating pains, anguish of suffocating sufferings and the pangs of death.

Thereafter he was clad in the shroud while he remained quiet and thoroughly submissive to others. Then he was placed on planks in such a state that he had been down-trodden by hardships and thinned by ailments. The crowd of young men and helping brothers carried him to his house of loneliness where all connections of visitors are severed. Thereafter those who accompanied him went away and those who were wailing for him returned and then he was made to sit in his grave for terrifying questioning and slippery examination. The great calamity of that place is the hot water and entry into Hell, flames of eternal Fire and intensity of blazes. There is no resting period, no gap for ease, no power to intervene, no death to bring about solace and no sleep to make him forget pain. He rather lies under several kinds of deaths and moment-to-moment punishment. We seek refuge with Alláh.

The lesson to be learnt from those who have passed away

O’ creatures of Alláh! where are those who were allowed (long) ages to live and they enjoyed bounty. They were taught and they learnt; they were given time and they passed it in vain; they were kept healthy and they forgot (their duty). They were allowed long period (of life), were handsomely provided, were warned of grievous punishment and were promised big rewards. You should avoid sins that lead to destruction and vices that attract wrath (of Alláh).

O’ people who possess eyes and ears and health and wealth! Is there any place of protection, any shelter of safety, or asylum or haven, or occasion to run away or to come back (to this world)? If not, *“how are you then turned away”* (Qur’án, 6:95; 10:34; 35:3; 40:62) and wither are you averting? By what things have you been deceived? Certainly, the share of every one of you from this earth is just a piece of land equal to his own stature and size where he would lie on his cheeks covered with dust. The present is an opportune moment for acting.

O’ creatures of Alláh, since the neck is free from the loop, and spirit is also unfettered, now you have time for seeking guidance: you are in ease of body; you can assemble in crowds, the rest of life is before you; you have opportunity of acting by will; there is opportunity for repentance, and peaceful circumstances. (But you should act) before you are overtaken by narrow circumstances and distress, or fear and weakness, before the approach of the awaited death and before seizure by the Almighty, the Powerful.

as-Sayyid ar-Radí says: It is related that when Amír al-mu’minín delivered this sermon people began to tremble, tears flowed from their eyes and their hearts were frightened. Some people call this sermon the Brilliant Sermon (*al-Khutbatu’l-Gharrá’*)

(1). Alláh has furnished every creature with natural dress, which is the means of protecting it from cold and heat. Thus, some animals are covered in feathers and some carry apparels of wool on their bodies. But the high degree of intelligence of man and the quality of shame and modesty in him demands distinction from other creatures. Consequently, to maintain this distinction he has been taught the ways of covering his body. It was this natural impulse that when Adam was made to give up his dress he began to cover his body with leaves. The Qur'án says:

> *So when they tested* (of) *the tree their shameful things got displayed unto them and they began covering themselves with leaves of the garden ...* (Qu'rán, 7:22)

This was the punishment awarded for his committing what was better for him to omit. When removal of dress is punishment its putting on would be a favour, and since this is peculiar to man it has been particularly mentioned.

(2). The intention is that Alláh would resurrect all the dead, even though they had been eaten by beasts and been merged in their bodies. Its aim is to refute the view of the philosophers who hold that the resurrection of the non-existent is impossible and who do not therefore believe in the physical resurrection. Their argument briefly is that a thing which has lost existence by death cannot return to life. Consequently, after the destruction of this world the return of any of its beings to life is out of question. But this belief is not correct because dispersal of the parts does not mean its non-existence, so as to say that putting these parts together again would involve resurrection of the non-existent. On the other hand separated and dispersed parts continue to exist in some form or the other. Of course, in this connection this objection has some force that when every person is to be resurrected in his own form, then in case one person has eaten the other, then in such a case it would be impossible to resurrect either of them with his own constituent parts, since this would involve creating deficiency of parts in that who had eaten the other.

To this metaphysicians have replied that in everybody there are some constituents which are essential and others which are non-essential. The essential constituents remain constant from the beginning till end of life and suffer no change or alteration, and resurrection with regard to such constituents would not create any deficiency in the man who ate the other.

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SERMON 83

About `Amr ibn al-`ÁS

I am surprised at the son of an-Nábighah that he says about me among the people of Syria (ash-Shám) that I am a jester and that I am engaged in frolics and fun. He said wrong and spoke sinfully. Beware, the worst speech is what is untrue. He speaks and lies. He promises and breaks the promise. He begs and sticks, but when someone begs from him he withholds miserly. He betrays the pledge and ignores kinship.

When in a battle, he commands and admonishes but only uptil the swords do not come into action. When such a moment arrives his great trick is to turn naked(1) before his adversary. By Alláh, surely the remembrance of death has kept me away from fun and play while obliviousness about the next world has prevented him from speaking truth. He has not sworn allegiance to Mu`áwiyah without purpose; but has beforehand got him to agree that he will have to pay its price, and gave him an award for forsaking religion.

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(1). Amír al-mu'minín here refers to the incident when the 'Conqueror of Egypt' `Amr ibn al-`ÁS exhibited the feat of his courage by displaying his private parts. What happened was that when in the battlefield of Siffín he and Amír al-mu'minín had an encounter, he rendered himself naked in order to ward off the blow of the sword. At this Amír al-mu'minín turned his face away and spared him his life. The famous Arab poet al-Farazdaq said about it:

> There is no good in warding off trouble by ignominy as was done one day by `Amr ibn al-`ÁS by display of his private parts.

Even in this ignoble act `Amr ibn al-`ÁS had not the credit of doing it himself, but had rather followed another one who had preceded him, because the man who first adopted this device was Talháh ibn Abí Talháh who had saved his life in the battle of Uhud by becoming naked before Amír al-mu'minín, and so he showed this way to the others. Thus, besides `Amr ibn al-`ÁS this trick was played by Busr ibn Abí Artát also to save himself from the sword of Amír al-mu'minín. When after the performance of this notable deed Busr went to Mu`áwiyah the latter recalled `Amr ibn al-`ÁS's act as precedent in order to remove this man's shamefulness and said, "O' Busr, no matter. There is nothing to feel shameful about it in view of `Amr ibn al-`ÁS's precedent before you."

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SERMON 84

About the perfection of Alláh and counselling

I stand witness that there is no god but Alláh, He is One and there is no partner with Him. He is the First, such that nothing was before Him. He is the Last, such that there is not limit for Him. Imagination cannot catch any of His qualities. Hearts cannot entertain belief about His nature. Analysis and division cannot be applied to Him. Eyes and hearts cannot compare Him.

A part of the same sermon

O' creatures of Alláh! take lesson from useful items of instruction and shining indications. Be cautioned by effective items of warning. Get benefit from preaching and admonition. It is as though the claws of death are pressed in you, the connection of hope and desires has been cut asunder, hard affairs have befallen you and your march is towards the place where everyone has to go, namely death. Hence*, "with every person there is a driver and a witness"* (Qur'án, 50:21). The driver drives him towards resurrection while the witness furnishes evidence about his deeds.

A part of the same sermon (about Paradise)

In Paradise there are high classes and different places of stay. Its boundary never ends. He who stays in it will never depart from it. He who is endowed with everlasting abode in it will not get old, and its resident will not face want.

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SERMON 85

About getting ready for the next world and following Alláh's commandments

Alláh knows hidden matters and is aware of inner feelings. He encompasses everything. He has control over everything and power over everything. Everyone of you should do whatever he has to do during his days of life before the approach of death, in his leisure before his occupation, and during the breathing of his breath before it is overtaken by suffocation, should provide for himself and his journey and should collect provision from his place of halt for his place of stay.

So remember Alláh, O' people, about what He has asked you in His Book to take care of, and about His rights that He has entrusted to you. Verily, Alláh has not created you in vain nor left you unbridled nor left you alone in ignorance and gloom. He has defined what you should leave behind. taught you your acts, ordained your death, sent down to you. *"the Book* (Qur'án) *explaining everything"* (Qur'án, 16:89) and made His Prophet live among you for a long time till He completed for him and for you the message sent through the Qur'án namely the religion liked by Him, and clarified through him His good acts and evil acts, His prohibitions and His commands.

He placed before you His arguments and exhausted his excuses upon you. He put forth to you His promises and warned you of severe retribution. You should therefore make full atonement during your remaining days and let yourselves practice endurance in these days. These days are fewer as against the many days during which you have shown obliviousness and heedlessness towards admonition. Do not allow time to yourselves because it will put you on the path of wrong-doers and do not be easy-going because this will push you towards sinfulness.

O' creatures of Alláh! the best adviser for himself is he who is the most obedient to Alláh, and the most deceiving for himself is he who is the most disobedient to Alláh. Deceived is he who deceived his own self. Enviable is he whose Faith is safe. Fortunate is he who takes lesson from others, while unfortunate is he who fell victim to his desires. You should know that even the smallest hypocrisy is like believing in more than one God, and keeping company of people who follow their desires is the key to obliviousness from religion, and is the seat of Satan.

Be on your guard against falsehood because it is contrary to Faith. A truthful person is on the height of salvation and dignity, while the liar is on the edge of ignominy and degradation. Do not be jealous because jealousy eats away Faith just as fire eats away dried wood. Do not bear malice because, it is a scraper (of virtues). And know that desires make wit forgetful and make memory oblivious. You should falsify desire because it is a deception, and he who has desires is in deceit.

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SERMON 86

The Qualities of a faithful believer

O’ creatures of Alláh! the most beloved of Alláh is he whom Alláh has given power (to act) against his passions, so that his inner side is (submerged in) grief and the outer side is covered with fear. The lamp of guidance is burning in his heart. He has provided entertainment for the day that is to befall him. He regards what is distant to be near himself and takes the hard to be light. He looks at and perceives; he remembers (Alláh) and enhances (the tempo of his) actions. He drinks sweet water to whose source his way has been made easy. So he drinks to satisfaction and takes the level path. He has put off the clothes of desires and got rid of worries except one worry peculiar to him. He is safe from misguidance and the company of people who follow their passions. He has become the key to the doors of guidance, and the lock for the doors of destruction.

He has seen his way and is walking on it. He knows his pillar (of guidance) and has crossed over his deep water. He has caught hold of the most reliable supports and the strongest ropes. He is on that level of conviction which is like the brightness of the sun. He has set himself for Alláh, the Glorified, for performance of the most sublime acts of facing all that befalls him and taking every step needed for it. He is the lamp in darkness. He is the dispeller of all blindness, key to the obscure, remover of complexities, and a guide in vast deserts. When he speaks he makes you understand whereas when he remains silent then it is safe to do so. He did everything only for Alláh and so Alláh also made him His own. Consequently, he is like the mines of His faith and as a stump in His earth. He has enjoined upon himself (to follow) justice.

The first step of his justice is the rejection of desires from his heart. He describes right and acts according to it. There is no good which he has not aimed at nor any likely place (of virtue) of the Qur’án. Therefore the Qur’án is his guide and leader. He gets down when the Qur’án puts down his weight and he settles where the Qur’án settles him down.

The Characteristics of an unfaithful believer

While the other (kind of) man is he who calls himself learned but he is not so. He has gleaned ignorance from the ignorant and misguidance from the misguided. He has set for the people a trap (made) of the ropes of deceit and untrue speech. He takes the Qur’án according to his own views and right after his passions. He makes people feel safe from big sins and takes light the serious crimes. He says that he is waiting for (clarification of) doubts but he remains plunged therein, and that he keeps aloof from innovations but actually he is immersed in them. His shape is that of a man, but his heart is that of a beast. He does not know the door of guidance to follow nor the door of misguidance to keep aloof therefrom. These are living dead bodies.

About the Descendants (`Itrah) of the Holy Prophet

“So wither are you going to” (Qur’án, 81:26) and *“how are you then turned away?”* (Qur’án, 6:95; 10:34; 35:3; 40:62). Ensigns (of guidance) are standing, indications (of virtue) are clear, and the minarets (of light) have been fixed. Where are you being taken astray and how are you groping while you have among you the descendants of the Prophet? They are the reins of Right, ensigns of Faith and tongues of truth. Accord to them the same good position as you accord to the Qur’án, and come to them (for quenching the thirst of guidance) as the thirsty camels approach the water spring.

O’ people take this saying(1) of the last of the Prophets that he who dies from among us is not dead, and he who decays (after dying) from among us does not really decay. Do not say what you do not understand, because most of the Right is in what you deny. Accept the argument of one against whom you have no argument. It is I. Did I not act before you on the greater *thaqal* (*ath-thaqal al-akbar*, i.e. the Qur’án) and did I not retain among you the smaller *thaqal* (*ath-thaqal-al-asghar*, i.e. the descendants of the Prophet).(2) I fixed among you the standard of faith, and I taught you the limits of lawful and unlawful. I clothed you with the garments of safety with my justice and spread for you (the carpet of) virtue by my word and deed.

I showed you high manners through myself. Do not exercise your imagination about what the eye cannot see or the mind cannot conceive.

A part of the same sermon, about Banú Umayyah

Till people begin thinking that the world is attached to the Umayyads, would be showering its benefits on them, and lead them to its clear spring for watering, and that their whip and sword will not be removed from the people. Whoever thinks so is wrong. There are rather a few drops from the joys of life which they would suck for a while and then vomit out the whole of it.

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(1). This saying of the Prophet is a definite proof of the view that the life of any one from among the Ahlu'l-bayt (Household of the Holy Prophet) does not come to an end and that apparent death makes no difference in their sense of living, although human intelligence is unable to comprehend the conditions and happenings of that life. There are many truths beyond this world of senses which human mind cannot yet understand. Who can say how in the narrow corner of the grave where it is not possible even to breathe, replies will be given to the questions of the angels Munkar and Nakír? Similarly, what is the meaning of life of the martyrs in the cause of Alláh, who have neither sense nor motion, can neither see nor hear? Although to us they appear to be dead, yet the Qur'án testifies to their life.

> *And say not of those who are slain in the path of Alláh that they are dead; Nay,* (they are) *living, but ye perceive not.* (2:154)

> At another place it says about their life:

> *Reckon not those who are slain in the way of Alláh, to be dead; Nay! alive they are with their Lord being sustained.* (3:169)

When restriction has been placed on mind and tongue even in respect of the common martyrs that they should not be called dead nor considered dead, how would not those individuals whose necks were reserved for sword and palate for poison be living for all times to come.

About their bodies Amír al-mu'minín has said that by passage of time no signs of ageing or decay occur in them, but they remain in the same state in which they fell as martyrs. There should be nothing strange in it because dead bodies preserved through material means still exist. When it is possible to do so through material means will it be out of the Power of the Omnipotent Creator to preserve against change and decay the bodies of those upon whom He has bestowed the sense of everlasting life? Thus about the martyrs of Badr, the Holy Prophet said:

> Shroud them even with their wounds and flowing blood because when they would rise on the Day of Judgement blood would be pushing out of their throats .

(2). *"ath-thaqal al-akbar"* implies the Qur'án and *"ath-thaqal al-asghar"* means Ahlu'l-bayt (the Household of the Holy Prophet) as in the Prophet's saying: "Verily, I am leaving among you (the) two precious things (of high estimation and of care)," the reference is to Qur'án and Ahlu'l-bayt. There are several reasons for using this word Firstly, *"thaqal"* means the kit of a traveller, and since the kit is much in need, it is protected carefully. Secondly, it means a precious thing; and since this is of great importance, one is bound to follow the injunctions of the Qur'án and the actions of Ahlu'l-bayt. So they have been called 'precious things'. Since Alláh has made arrangements for the protection of the Qur'án and Ahlu'l-bayt till doomsday so they have been called *"thaqalayn"* . So the Prophet before leaving this world for the next, declared them to be his valuable possessions and ordered people to preserve them. Thirdly, then have been called *"Thaqalayn"* (precious things) in view of their purity and high value. Thus Ibn Hajar al-Haytamí writes:

> The Prophet has called the Qur'án and his Descendants as *"thaqalayn"* (two precious things) because *"thaqal"* means a pure, chaste and preserved thing, and either of these two were really so, each of them is the treasure of Divine knowledge and a source of scholarly secrets and religious commandments. For that reason the Prophet desired the people to follow them and to stick to them and to secure knowledge from them. Among them the most deserving of attachment is the Imám and Scholar of the family of the Prophet namely `Alí ibn Abí Tálib (Alláh may honour his face) because of his great insight and copiousness of knowledge which we have already described. (*as-Sawa`iq al-muhriqah*, p. 90)

Since the Prophet has with regard to apparent implication attributed the Qur'án to Alláh and the descendants to himself, therefore in keeping with the natural status the Qur'án has been called the bigger weight while the descendants, the smaller weight. Otherwise from the point of view of being followed both are equal and from the point of view of utility in the development of character there can be no question in the status of the speaking party (the Ahlu'l-bayt) being higher than the silent one (the

Qur’án).

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SERMON 87

About the division of the community into factions

So now, certainly, Alláh did not break the neck of any unruly tyrant in this world except after allowing him time and opportunity and did not join the broken bone of any people *(ummah)* until He did not inflict calamity and distress upon them. Even less than what sufferings and misfortunes have yet to fall upon you or have already befallen you are enough for giving lessons. Every man with a heart is not intelligent, every ear does not listen and every eye does not see.

I wonder, and there is no reason why I should not wonder, about the faults of these groups who have introduced alterations in their religious pleas, who do not move on the footsteps of their Prophet nor follow the actions of the vicegerent. They do not believe in the unknown and do not avoid the evil. They act on the doubts and tread in (the way of) their passions. For them good is whatever they consider good and evil is whatever they consider evil. Their reliance for resolving distresses is on themselves. Their confidence in regard to dubious matters is on their own opinions as if every one of them is the Leader (Imám) of himself. Whatever he has decided himself he considers it to have been taken through reliable sources and strong factors.

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SERMON 88

About the Holy Prophet

Alláh sent the Prophet when the mission of other Prophets had stopped and the peoples were in slumber for a long time. Evils were raising heads, all matters were under disruption and in flames of wars, while the world was devoid of brightness, and full of open deceitfulness. Its leaves had turned yellow and there was absence of hope about its fruits. While water had gone underground. The minarets of guidance had disappeared and signs of destruction had appeared. It was stern to its people and frowned in the face of its seeker. Its fruit was vice and its food was carcass. Its inner dress was fear and outer cover was sword.

So take lesson, O' creatures of Alláh, and recall that (evil doing) with which your fathers and brothers are entangled, and for which they have to account. By my life, your time is not much behind theirs, nor have long periods or centuries lapsed between you and them, nor are you much distant from when you were in their loins.

By Alláh, whatever the Prophet told them, I am here telling you the same and whatever you hear today is not different from what they heard yesterday. The eyes that were opened for them and the hearts that were made for them at that time, just the same have been given to you at this time. By Alláh, you have not been told anything that they did not know and you have not been given anything which they were deprived. Certainly you have been afflicted by a calamity (which is like a she-camel) whose nose-string is moving about and whose strap is loose So in whatever condition these deceitful people are should not deceive you, because it is just a long shadow whose term is fixed.

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SERMON 89

Alláh's attributes and some advice

Praise be to Alláh who is well-known without being seen, Who creates without pondering over, Who has ever been existent when there was no sky with domes, nor curtains with lofty doors, nor gloomy night, nor peaceful ocean, nor mountains with broad pathways, nor curved mountain roads, nor earth of spread floors, nor self-reliant creatures. He is the Originator of creation and their Master. He is the God of the creation and its feeder. The sun and the moon are steadily moving in pursuit of His will. They make every fresh thing old and every distant thing near.

He distributed their sustenance and has counted their deeds and acts, the number of their breaths, their concealed looks, and whatever is hidden in their bosoms. He knows their places of stay and places of last resort in the loins and wombs till they reach their end.

His punishment on enemies is harsh despite the extent of His Mercy, and His compassion on His friends is vast despite His harsh punishment. He overpowers one who wants to overcome Him, and destroys one who clashes with Him. He disgraces one who opposes Him and gains sway over one who bears Him hostility. He is sufficient for one who relies on Him. He gives one who asks Him. He repays one who lends to Him. He rewards one who thanks Him.

O' creatures of Alláh, weigh yourselves before you are weighed and assess yourselves before you are assessed. Breathe before suffocation of the throat. Be submissive before you are harshly driven. Know that if one does not help himself in acting as his own adviser and warner then no one else can (effectively) be his adviser or warner.

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SERMON 90

This sermon is known as the Sermon of Skeletons(1)

(Khutbatu'l-Ashbáh) and it holds one of the highest positions among the sermons of Amír al-mu'minín. Mas`adah ibn Sadaqah has related from al-Imám Ja`far ibn Muhammad as-Sádiq (p.b.u.t.) saying: "Amír al-mu'minín delivered this sermon from the pulpit of (the mosque of) Kúfah when someone asked him, 'O' Amír al-mu'minín! describe Alláh for us in such a way that we may imagine that we see Him with eyes so that our love and knowledge may increase about Him.' Amír al-mu'minín became angry at this (request of the questioner) and ordered the Muslims to gather in the mosque. So many Muslims gathered in the mosque that the place was over-crowded. Then Amír al-mu'minín ascended the pulpit while he was still in a state of anger and his colour was changed. After he had praised Alláh and extolled Him and sought His blessings on the Prophet he said:

Description of Alláh

Praise be to Alláh whom refusal to give away and stinginess do not make rich and Whom munificence and generosity do not make poor, although everyone who gives away loses (to that extent) except He, and every miser is blamed for his niggardliness. He obliges through beneficial bounties and plentiful gifts and grants. The whole creation is His dependants (in sustenance)(2). He has guaranteed their livelihood and ordained their sustenance. He has prepared the way for those who turn to Him and those who seek what is with Him. He is as generous about what He is asked as He is about that for which He is not asked. He is the First for whom there was no 'before' so that there could be anything before Him. He is the Last for whom there is no 'after' so that there could be anything after Him. He prevents the pupils of the eyes from seeing Him or perceiving Him. Time does not change over Him, so as to admit of any change of condition about Him. He is not in any place so as to allow Him movement (from one place to another).

If He gives away all that the mines of the mountains emit out or the gold, silver, pearls and cuttings of coral which the shells of the ocean vomit out, it would not affect his munificence, nor diminish the extent of what He has. (In fact) He would still have such treasures of bounty as would not decrease by the demands of the creatures, because He is that generous Being Whom the begging of beggars cannot make poor nor the pertinacity of beseechers make miser.

Attributes of Alláh as described in the Holy Qur'án

Then look on questioner, be confined to those of His attributes which the Qur'án had described and seek light from the effulgence of its guidance. Leave to Alláh that knowledge which Satan has prompted you to seek and which neither the Qur'án enjoins you to seek nor is there any trace of it in the actions or sayings of the Prophet and other leaders *(A`immah)* of guidance. This is the extreme limit of Alláh's claim upon you. Know that firm in knowledge are those who refrain from opening the curtains that lie against the unknown, and their acknowledgement of ignorance about the details of the hidden unknown prevents them from further probe. Alláh praises them for their admission that they are unable to get knowledge not allowed to them. They do not go deep into the discussion of what is not enjoined upon them about knowing Him and they call it firmness. Be content with this and do not limit the Greatness of Alláh after the measure of your own intelligence, of else you would be among the destroyed ones.

He is Powerful, such that when imagination shoots its arrows to comprehend the extremity of His power, and mind, making itself free of the dangers of evil thoughts, tries to find Him in the depth of His realm, and hearts long to grasp realities of His attributes and openings of intelligence penetrate beyond description in order to secure knowledge about His Being, crossing the dark pitfalls of the unknown and concentrating towards Him He would turn them back. They would return defeated admitting that the reality of His knowledge cannot be comprehended by such random efforts, nor can an iota of the sublimity of His Honour enter the understanding of thinkers.

About Alláh's creation

He originated the creation without any example which He could follow and without any specimen prepared by any known creator that was before Him. He showed us the realm of His Might, and such wonders which speak of His Wisdom. The confession of the created things that their existence owes itself to Him made us realise that argument has been furnished about knowing Him (so that there is no excuse against it). The signs of His creative power and standard of His wisdom are fixed in the wonderful things He has created. Whatever He has created is an argument in His favour and a guide towards Him. Even a silent thing is a guide towards Him as though it speaks, and its guidance towards the Creator is clear.

(O' Alláh) I stand witness that he who likens Thee with the separateness of the limbs or with the joining of the extremities of his body did not acquaint his inner self with knowledge about Thee, and his heart did not secure conviction to the effect that there is no partner for Thee. It is as though he has no heard the (wrongful) followers disclaiming their false gods by sayings *"By Alláh, we were certainly in manifest error when we equalled you with the Lord of the worlds."* (Qur'án, 26:97-98). They are wrong who liken Thee to their idols, and dress Thee with apparel of the creatures by their imagination, attribute to Thee parts of body by their own thinking and consider Thee after the creatures of various types, through the working of their intelligence. I stand witness that whoever equated Thee with anything out of Thy creation took a match for Thee, and whoever takes a match for Thee is an unbeliever, according to what is stated in Thy unambiguous verses and indicated by the evidence of Thy clear arguments. (I also stand witness that) Thou art that Alláh who cannot be confined in (the fetters of) intelligence so as to admit change of condition by entering its imagination nor in the shackles of mind so as to become limited and an object of alterations.

A part of the same sermon

About the greatest perfection in Alláh's creation

He has fixed limits for every thing He has created and made the limits firm, and He has fixed its working and made the working delicate. He has fixed its direction and it does not transgress the limits of its position nor fall short of reaching the end of its aim. It did not disobey when it was commanded to move at His will; and how could it do so when all matters are governed by His will. He is the Producer of varieties of things without exercise of imagination, without the urge of an impulse, hidden in Him, without (the benefit of) any experiment taken from the vicissitudes of time and without any partner who might have assisted Him in creating wonderful things.

Thus the creation was completed by His order and it bowed to His obedience and responded to His call. The laziness of any slug or the inertness of any excuse-finder did not prevent it from doing so. So He straightened the curves of the things and fixed their limits. With His power He created coherence in their contradictory parts and joined together the factors of similarity. Then He separated them in varieties which differ in limits, quantities, properties and shapes. All this is new creation. He made them firm and shaped them according as He wished and invented them.

A part of the same sermon, containing description of the sky

He has arranged the depressions and elevations of the openings of the sky. He has joined the breadths of its breaches, and has joined them with one another. He has made easy the approach to its heights for those (angels) who come down with His commands and those (angels) who go up with the deeds of the creatures. He called it when it was yet (in the form of) vapour. At once the links of its joints joined up. Then Alláh opened up its closed door and put the sentinels of meteors at its holes, and held them with His hands (i.e. power) from falling into the vastness of air.

He commanded it to remain stationary in obedience to His commands. He made its sun the bright indication for its day, and moon the gloomy indication for its night. He then put them in motion in their orbits and ordained their (pace of) movement in the stages of their paths in order to distinguish with their help between night and day, and in order that the reckoning of years and calculations may be known by their fixed movements. Then He hung in its vastness its sky and put therein its decoration consisting of small bright pearls and lamp-like stars. He shot at the over-hearers arrows of bright meteors. He put them in motion on their appointed routine and made them into fixed stars, moving stars, descending stars, ascending stars, ominous stars and lucky stars.

A part of the same sermon, containing description of Angels

Then Alláh, the Glorified, created for inhabiting of His skies and populating the higher strata of his realm new (variety of) creatures namely the angels. With them He filled the openings of its cavities and populated with them the vastness of it circumference. In between the openings of these cavities there resounds the voices of angels glorifying Him in the enclosures of sublimity, (behind) curtains of concealment and in veils of His Greatness. And behind this resounding which deafens the ears there is the effulgence of light which defies the approach of sight to it, and consequently the sight stands, disappointed at its limitation.

He created them in different shapes and with diverse characteristics. They have wings. They glorify the sublimity of His Honour. They do not appropriate to themselves His skill that shows itself in creation. Nor do they claim they create anything in which He is unparalleled. *"But they are rather honoured creatures who do not take precedence over Him in uttering anything, and they act according to His command."* (Qur'án, 21: 26-27). He has made them the trustees of His revelation and sent them to Prophets as holders of His injunctions and prohibitions. He has immunised

them against the waviness of doubts. Consequently no one among them goes astray from the path of His will. He has helped them with the benefits of succour and has covered their hearts with humility and peace. He has opened for them doors of submission to His Glories. He has fixed for them bright minarets as signs of His Oneness. The weights of sins do not burden them and the rotation of nights and days does not make them move. Doubts do not attack with arrows the firmness of their faith. Misgivings do not assault the bases of their beliefs. The spark of malice does not ignite among them. Amazement does not tarnish what knowledge of Him their hearts possess, or His greatness and awe of His glory that resides in their bosoms. Evil thoughts do not lean towards them to affect their imagination with their own rust.

Among them are those who are in the frame of heavy clouds, or in the height of lofty mountains, or in the gloom of over-powering darkness. And there are those whose feet have pierced the lowest boundaries of the earth. These feet are like white ensigns which have gone forth into the vast expanse of wind. Under them blows the light wind which retains them upto its last end.

Occupation in His worship has made them carefree, and realities of Faith have served as a link between them and His knowledge. Their belief in Him has made them concentrate on Him. They long from Him not from others. They have tasted the sweetness of His knowledge and have drunk from the satiating cup of His love. The roots of His fear have been implanted in the depth of their hearts. Consequently they have bent their straight backs through His worship. The length of the humility, and extreme nearness has not removed from them the rope of their fear.

They do not entertain pride so as to make much of their acts. Their humility before the glory of Alláh does not allow them to esteem their own virtues. Languor does not affect them despite their long affliction. Their longings (for Him) do not lessen so that they might turn away from hope in (Alláh) their Sustainer. The tips of their tongues do not get dry by constant prayers (to Alláh). Engagements (in other matters) do not betake them so as to turn their (loud) voices for Him into faint ones. Their shoulders do not get displaced in the postures of worship. They do not move their necks (this and that way) for comfort in disobedience of His command. Follies of negligence do not act against their determination to strive, and the deceptions of desires do not overcome their courage.

They regard the Master of the Throne (Alláh) as the store for the day of their need. Because of their love (for Him) they turn to Him even when others turn to the creatures. They do not reach the ending limit of His worship. Their passionate fondness for His worship does not turn them except to the springs of their own hearts, springs which are never devoid of His hope and His fear. Fear (of Alláh) never leaves them so that they might slacken in their efforts, nor have temptations entrapped them so that they might prefer this light search over their (serious) effort.

They do not consider their past (virtuous) deeds as big, for if they had considered them big then fear would have wiped away hopes from their hearts. They did not differ (among themselves) about their Sustainer as a result of Satan's control over them. The vice of separation from one another did not disperse them. Rancour and mutual malice did not overpower them. Ways of wavering did not divide them. Differences of degree of courage did not render them into divisions. Thus they are devotees of faith. Neither crookedness (of mind), nor excess, nor lethargy nor languor breaks them from its rope. There is not the thinnest point in the skies but there is an angel over it in prostration (before Alláh) or (busy) in quick performance (of His commands). By long worship of their Sustainer they increase their knowledge, and the honour of their Sustainer increases in their hearts.

A part of the same sermon, in description of earth and its spreading on water

Alláh spread the earth on stormy and tumultuous waves and the depths of swollen seas, where waves clashed with each other and high surges leapt over one another. They emitted foam like the he-camel at the time of sexual excitement. So the tumult of the stormy water was subdued by the weight of the earth, when the earth pressed it with its chest its shooting agitation eased, and when the earth rolled on it with its shoulder bones the water meekly submitted. Thus after the tumult of its surges it became tame and overpowered, and an obedient prisoner of the shackles of disgrace, while the earth spread itself and became solid in the stormy depth of this water. (In this way) the earth put an end to the pride, self conceit, high position and superiority of the water, and muzzled the intrepidity of its flow. Consequently it stopped after its stormy flow and settled down after its tumult.

When the excitement of water subsided under the earth's sides and under the weight of the high and lofty mountains placed on its shoulders, Alláh flowed springs of water from its high tops and distributed them through plains and low places and moderated their movement by fixed rocks and high mountain tops. Then its trembling came to a standstill because of the penetration of mountains in (various) parts of its surface and their being fixed in its deep

areas, and their standing on its plains. Then Alláh created vastness between the earth and firmament, and provided blowing wind for its inhabitants. Then He directed its inhabitants to spread all over its convenient places. Thereafter He did not leave alone the barren tracts of the earth where high portions lacked in water-springs and where rivers could not find their way, but created floating clouds which enliven the unproductive areas and grow vegetation.

He made a big cloud by collecting together small clouds and when water collected in it and lightning began to flash on its sides and the flash continued under the white clouds as well as the heavy ones He sent it raining heavily. The cloud was hanging towards the earth and southerly winds were squeezing it into shedding its water like a she-camel bending down for milking. When the cloud prostrated itself on the ground and delivered all the water it carried on itself Alláh grew vegetation on the plain earth and herbage on dry mountains. As a result, the earth felt pleased at being decorated with its gardens and wondered at her dress of soft vegetation and the ornaments of its blossoms. Alláh made all this the means of sustenance for the people and feed for the beasts. He has opened up highways in its expanse and has established minarets (of guidance) for those who tread on its highways.

On the Creation of Man and the sending of the Prophet

When He has spread out the earth and enforced His commands He chose Adam (peace be upon him) as the best in His creation and made him the first of all creation. He made him to reside in Paradise and arranged for his eating in it, and also indicated from what He had prohibited him. He told him that proceeding towards it meant His disobedience and endangering his own position. But Adam did what he had been refrained from, just as Alláh already knew beforehand. Consequently, Alláh sent him down after (accepting) his repentance, to populate His earth with his progeny and to serve as a proof and plea for Him among his creatures.

Even when He made Adam die He did not leave them without one who would serve among them as proof and plea for His Godhead, and serve as the link between them and His knowledge, but He provided to them the proofs through His chosen Messengers and bearers of the trust of His Message, age after age till the process came to end with our Prophet Muhammad - Alláh may bless him and his descendants - and His pleas and warnings reached finality.

He ordained livelihoods(3) with plenty and with paucity. He distributed them narrowly as well as profusely. He did it with justice to test whomever He desired, with prosperity or with destitution, and to test through it the gratefulness or endurance of the rich and the poor. Then He coupled plenty with misfortunes of destitution, safety with the distresses of calamities and pleasures of enjoyment with pangs of grief. He created fixed ages and made them long or short and earlier or later, and ended them up with death. He had made death capable of pulling up the ropes of ages and cutting them asunder.

He(4) knows the secrets of those who conceal them, the secret conversation of those who engage in it, the inner feelings of those who indulge in guesses, the established certainties, the inklings of the eyes, the inner contents of hearts and depths of the unknown. He also knows what can be heard only by bending the holes of the ears, the summer resorts of ants and winter abodes of the insects, resounding of the cries of wailing women and the sound of steps. He also knows the spots in the inner sheaths of leaves where fruits grow, the hiding places of beasts namely caves in mountains and valleys, the hiding holes of mosquitoes on the trunks of trees and their herbage, the sprouting points of leaves in the branches, the dripping points of semen passing through passages of loins, small rising clouds and the big giant ones, the drops of rain in the thick clouds, the particles of dust scattered by whirlwinds through their skirts, the lines erased by rain floods, the movements of insects on sand-dunes, the nests of winged creatures on the cliffs of mountains and the singing of chattering birds in the gloom of their brooding places.

And He knows whatever has been treasured by mother-of-pearls, and covered under the waves of oceans, all that which is concealed under the darkness of night and all that on which the light of day is shining, as well as all that on which sometimes darkness prevails and sometimes light shines, the trace of every footstep, the feel of every movement, the echo of every sound, the motion of every lip, the abode of every living being, the weight of every particle, the sobs of every sobbing heart, and whatever is there on the earth like fruits of trees or falling leaf, or the settling place of semen, or the congealing of blood or clot and the developing of life and embryo.

On all this He suffers no trouble, and no impediment hampers Him in the preservation of what he created nor any languor or grief hinders Him from the enforcement of commands and management of the creatures. His knowledge penetrates through them and they are within His counting. His justice extends to all of them and His bounty encompasses them despite their falling short of what is due to Him.

O’ my Alláh! thou deservest handsome description and the highest esteem. If wish is directed towards Thee, Thou art the best to be wished for. If hope is reposed in Thee, Thou art the Most Honoured to be hoped from. O’ my Alláh! Thou hast bestowed on me such power that I do not praise any one other than Thee, and I do not eulogise any one save Thee. I do not direct my praise towards others who are sources of disappointment and centres of misgivings. Thou hast kept away my tongue from the praises of human beings and eulogies of the created and the sustained. O’ my Alláh! every praiser has on whom he praises the right of reward and recompense. Certainly, I have turned to Thee with my eye at the treasures of Thy Mercy and stores of forgiveness.

O’ my Alláh! here stands one who has singled Thee with Oneness that is Thy due and has not regarded any one deserving of these praises and eulogies except Thee. My want towards Thee is such that nothing except Thy generosity can cure its destitution, nor provide for its need except Thy obligation and Thy generosity. So do grant us in this place Thy will and make us free from stretching hands to anyone other than Thee. *“Certainly, Thou art powerful over every thing. “* (Qur’án, 66:8).

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(1). The name of this sermon is the Sermon of *“al-Ashbáh“. “ashbáh“* is the plural of *shabah* which means skeleton, since it contains description of angels and other kinds of beings it has been named by this name.

The ground for being angry on the questioner was that his request was unconnected with the obligations of *sharí`ah* and beyond limits of human capacity.

(2). Alláh is the Guarantor of sustenance and Provider of livelihood as He says:

No creature is there crawling on the earth, but its provision rests on Alláh...(Qur’án, 11:6)

But His being guarantor means that He has provided ways for everyone to live and earn livelihood, and has allowed every one equal shares in forests, mountains, rivers, mines and in the vast earth, and has given everyone the right to make use of them. His bounties are not confined to any single person, nor is the door of His sustenance closed to any one. Thus, Alláh says:

All We do aid, these and (also) *those out of the bounty of thy Lord; and the bounty of thy Lord is not confined*. (Qur’án, 17:20)

If some one does not secure these things through languor or ease and sits effortless it is not possible that livelihood would reach his door. Alláh has laid the table with multifarious feeds but to get them it is necessary to extend the hand. He has deposited pearls in the bottom of the sea but it requires diving to get them out. He has filled the mountains with rubies and precious stones but they cannot be had without digging the stones. The earth contains treasures of growth but benefit cannot be drawn from them without sowing of seed. Heaps of edibles lie scattered on all four sides of the earth but they cannot be collected without the trouble of travelling. Thus, Alláh says:

... Traverse ye then its broad sides, and eat ye of His provision . . .(Qur’án*,* 67:15)

Alláh’s providing livelihood does not mean that no effort is needed in searching livelihood or no going out of the house is required for it, and that livelihood should itself finds its way to the seeker. The meaning of His being the provider of livelihood is that He has given earth the property of growing, He has sent rain from clouds for germination, created fruits, vegetables and grains. All this is from Alláh but securing them is connected with human effort. Whoever will strive will reap the benefits of his efforts, and whoever abstains from strife would face the consequences of his idleness and laziness. Accordingly Alláh says:

And that man shall have nothing but what he striveth for. (Qur’án, 53:39)

The order of universe hinges on the maxim “Sow and reap.” It is wrong to expect germination without sowing, to hope for results without effort. Limbs and faculties have been given solely to be kept active. Thus, Alláh addresses Mary and says:

And shake towards thee the trunk of the palm-tree, it will drop on thee dates fresh (and) ripe. Then eat and drink and refresh the eye... (Qur’án, 19:25-26)

Alláh provided the means for Mary's livelihood. He did not however pluck the dates from the tree and put them in her lap. This was because so far as production of food goes it is His concern. So he made the tree green, put fruits on it and ripened the fruits. But when the stage arrived for plucking them He did not intervene. He just recalled to Mary her job namely that she should now move her hand and get her food.

Again, if His providing the livelihood means that whatever is given is given by Him and whatever is received from Him, then whatever a man would earn and eat, and in whatever manner he would obtain it would be permissible for him, whether he obtains it by theft, bribery, oppression or violence, because it would mean Alláh's act and the food would be that given by Him, wherein he would have no free will, and where anything is out of the limits of free action there is no question of permissible or forbidden for it, nor is there any liability to account for it. But when it is not actually so and there is the question of permissible and forbidden then it should have bearing on human actions, so that it could be questioned whether is was secured in lawful or unlawful manner. Of course, where He has not bestowed the power of seeking the livelihood, there He has taken upon Himself the responsibility to provide the livelihood. Consequently, He has managed for the feeding of the embryo in the mother's womb, and it reaches him there according to its needs and requirements. But when this very young life enters the wide world and picks up energy to move its limbs, then it can't get its food from the source without moving his lips (for sucking).

(3). In the management of the affairs of this world Alláh has connected the sequence with the cause of human acts as a result of which the power of action in man does not remain idle, in the same way He had made these actions dependent on His own will, so man should not rely on his own power of action and forget the Creator. This is the issue of the will between two wills in the controversy of "free will or compulsion". Just as in the entire Universe nature's universal and sovereign law is in force, in the same way the production and distribution of food also is provided in a set manner under the dual force of Divine ordainment and human effort. And this is somewhere less and somewhere more depending on the proportion of human effort and the aim of Divine ordainment. Since He is the Creator of the means of livelihood, and the powers of seeking food have also been bestowed by Him, the paucity or plenty of livelihood has been attributed to Him because He has fixed different and separate measures for livelihood keeping in view the difference in efforts and actions and the good of the creatures. Somewhere there is poverty and somewhere affluence, somewhere distress and somewhere comfort, and some one is enjoying pleasure while some one else is suffering the hardships of want.

Qur'án says:

...amplifieth He their sustenance unto whomsoever He willeth and straiteneth; Verily He knoweth all things. (Qur'án, 42:12)

In sermon 23 Amír al-mu'minín has referred to this matter and said:

The Divine command descends from the sky towards the earth with whatever is ordained for every one, whether less or more, just like rain drops.

So just as there is a fixed process and manner for the benevolence of rain namely that vapours rise from the sea with the store of water, spread over in the sky in the shape of dark clouds and then ooze the water by drops till they form themselves in regular lines. They irrigate plains as well as high lands thoroughly and proceed onwards to collect in the low areas, so that the thirsty may drink it, animals may use it and dry lands may be watered from it. In the same way Alláh has provided all the means of livelihood but His bounty follows a particular mode in which there is never a jot of deviation. Thus Alláh says:

And there is not a thing but with Us are its treasures, and We do not send it down but in a known measure. (Qur'án, 15:21)

If man's greed and avarice exceeds its bounds, then just as excess of rain ruins crops instead of growing and bringing them up, so the abundance of the article of livelihood and necessaries of life would make man oblivious of Alláh and rouse him to revolt and unruliness. Consequently, Alláh says:

And should Alláh amplify the sustenance unto his servants, they would certainly rebel in the earth, but He sendeth it down by measure as he willeth; Verily of His servants, He is All-aware, All-seeing. (Qur'án, 42:27)

If He lessens the food then just as stoppage of rain makes the land arid and kills the animals, in the same way, by closure of the means of livelihood, human society would be destroyed and so there would remain no means of living and livelihood. Alláh accordingly says:

> *Or who is that who can provide you with sustenance should He withhold His sustenance?...*(Qur'án, 67:21)

Consequently, Alláh, the Wise the Omniscient has put the organisation for livelihood on moderate and proportionate lines, and in order to emphasise the importance of livelihood and sustenance and to keep them correlated with each other has introduced differences in the distribution of livelihood. Sometimes, this difference and unequal distribution owes itself to the difference of human effort and sometimes it is the consequence of overall arrangement of the affairs of the Universe and Divine acts of wisdom and objectives. This is because, if by poverty and want He has tested the poor in endurance and patience, in affluence and wealth there is severe test of the rich by way of thanks-giving and gratifying the rights of others, namely whether the rich person gratifies the claims of the poor and the distressed, and whether he takes care of the destitute or not. Again, where there is wealth there would also be dangers of all sorts. Sometimes there would be danger to the wealth and property and sometimes fear of poverty and want.

Consequently, there would be many persons who would be more satisfied and happy for lack of wealth. For them this destitution and want would be far better than the wealth which might snatch away their comfort and peace. Moreover sometimes this very wealth which one holds dearer than life becomes the cause of loss of one's life. Further, it has also been seen that so long as wealth was lacking character was above reproach, life was unblemished, but the moment property and wealth changed into plenty the conduct worsened, character became faulty and there appeared the vice of drink, crowd of beauties and gathering of singing and music. In such a case the absence of wealth was a blessing. However, being ignorant of Alláh's objectives, man cries out and being affected by transitory distress begins complaining but does not realise from how many vices which could have accrued owing to wealth he has remained aloof. Therefore, if wealth produces conveniences, poverty serves as a guard for the character.

(4). The eloquence with which Amír al-mu'minín has thrown light on Alláh's attributes of knowledge and the sublime words in which he has pictured the all-engrossing quality of His knowledge cannot but impress the mind of the most die-hard opponent. Thus, Ibn Abi'l-hadíd has written:

> If Aristotle, who believed that Alláh is only aware of the universe and not of its particulars, had heard this speech, his heart too would have inclined, his hair would have stood on end and his thinking would have undergone a dramatic change. Do you not see the brightness, force, vehemence, sublimity, glory, seriousness and ripeness of this speech? Besides these qualities, there is sweetness, colourfulness, delicacy and smoothness in it. I have not found any utterance similar to it. Of course, if there is any utterance matching it, that can be the word of Alláh only. And there is no wonder in it, because he is an off-shoot of the same tree (of the Prophet Ibráhím, who set up the Unity of Alláh), a distributory of the same river and a reflection of the same light. (*Sharh Nahj al-balághah*, vol.7, pp. 23-24)

Those who regard Alláh to possess only over-all knowledge argue that since details undergo changes, to believe Him to have knowledge of the changing details would necessitate changes in His knowledge but since knowledge is the same as His Being, His Being would have to be regarded as the object of change the result of which would be that He would have to be taken as having come into existence. In this way He would lose the attribute of being from ever. This is a very deceptive fallacy because changes in the object of knowledge can lead to changes in the knower only when it is assumed that the knower does not already possess knowledge of these changes. But since all the forms of change and alteration are crystal clear before Him there is no reason that with the changes in the objects of knowledge He too should be regarded changeable, although really this change is confined to the object of knowledge and does not affect knowledge in itself.

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SERMON 91

When people decided to Swear allegiance(1) at Amír al-mu'minín's hand after the murder of `Uthmán, he said:

Leave me and seek some one else. We are facing a matter which has (several) faces and colours, which neither hearts can stand nor intelligence can accept. Clouds are hovering over the sky, and faces are not discernible. You should know that if I respond to you I would lead you as I know and would not care about whatever one may say or abuse. If you leave me then I am the same as you are. It is possible I would listen to and obey whomever you make in charge of your affairs. I am better for you as a counsellor than as chief.

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(1). When with the murder of `Uthmán the seat of Caliphate became vacant, Muslims began to look at `Alí (p.b.u.h.) whose peaceful conduct, adherence to principles, and *politia lacumen* had been witnessed by them to a great extent during this long period. Consequently, they rushed for swearing allegiance in the same way as a traveller who had lost his way and catches sight of the objective would have rushed towards it, as the historian at-Tabarí (in *at-Táríkh*, vol .I, pp. 3066, 3067, 3076) records:

> People thronged on Amír al-mu'minín and said, "We want to swear allegiance to you and you see what troubles are befalling Islam and how we are being tried about the near ones of the Prophet."

But Amír al-mu'minín declined to accede to their request whereupon these people raised a hue and cry and began to shout loudly, "O' Abu'l-Hasan, do you not witness the ruination of Islam or see the advancing flood of unruliness and mischief? Do you have no fear of Alláh?" Even then Amír al-mu'minín showed no readiness to consent because he was noticing that the effects of the atmosphere that had come into being after the Prophet had overcome hearts and minds of the people, selfishness and lust for power had become rooted in them, their thinking affected by materialism and they had become habituated to treating government as the means for securing their ends. Now they would like to materialise the Divine Caliphate too and play with it. In these circumstances it would be impossible to change the mentalities or turn the direction of temperaments. In addition to these ideas he had also seen the end in view that these people should get further time to think over so that on frustration of their material ends hereafter they should not say that the allegiance had been sworn by them under a temporary expediency and that thought had not been given to it, just as `Umar's idea was about the first Caliphate, which appears from his statement that:

> Abú Bakr's Caliphate came into being without thought but Alláh saved us from its mischief. If anyone repeats such an affair you should kill him. (*as-Sahíh*, al-Bukharí, vol 8, pp.210, 211; *al-Musnad*, Ahmad ibn Hanbal, vol.1, p.55; at-Tabarí, vol.1, p.l822; Ibn al-Athír, vol.2, p.327; Ibn Hishám, vol.4, pp.308-309; Ibn Kathír, vol.5, p.246)

In short, when their insistence increased beyond limits, Amír al-mu'minín delivered this sermon wherein he clarified that "If you want me for your worldly ends, then I am not ready to serve as your instrument. Leave me and select someone else who may fulfil your ends. You have seen my past life that I am not prepared to follow anything except the Qur'án and *sunnah* and would not give up this principle for securing power. If you select someone else I would pay regard to the laws of the state and the constitution as a peaceful citizen should do. I have not at any stage tried to disrupt the collective existence of the Muslims by inciting revolt. The same will happen now. Rather, just as keeping the common good in view I have hitherto been giving correct advice, I would not grudge doing the same. If you let me in the same position it would be better for your worldly ends, because in that case I won't have power in my hands so that I could stand in the way of your worldly affairs, and create an impediment against your hearts' wishes. However, if you are determined on swearing allegiance on my hand, bear in mind that if you frown or speak against me I would force you to tread on the path of right, and in the matter of the right I would not care for anyone. If you want to swear allegiance even at this, you can satisfy your wish."

The impression Amír al-mu'minín had formed about these people is fully corroborated by later events. Consequently, when those who had sworn allegiance with worldly motives did not succeed in their objectives they broke away and rose against his government with baseless allegations.

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SERMON 92 (I)

About the annihilation of the Khárijites, the mischief mongering of Umayyads and the vastness of his own knowledge

So now, praise and eulogy be to Alláh, O' people, I have put out the eye of revolt. No one except me advanced towards it when its gloom was swelling and its madness was intense. Ask me before you miss me,(2) because, by Alláh, who has my life in His hands, if you ask me anything between now and the Day of Judgement or about the group who would guide a hundred people and also misguide a hundred people I would tell you who is announcing its march, who is driving it in the front and who is driving it at the rear, the stages where its riding animals would stop for rest and the final place of stay, and who among them would be killed and who would die a natural death.

When I am dead, hard circumstances and distressing events would befall you, many persons in the position of asking questions would remain silent with cast down eye, while those in the position of replying would lose courage. This would be at a time when wars would descend upon you with all hardship and days would be so hard on you that you would feel them prolonged because of hardship till Alláh would give victory to those remaining virtuous among you.

When mischief come they confuse (right with wrong) and when they clear away they leave a warning. They cannot be known at the time of approach but are recognised at the time of return. They blow like the blowing of winds, striking some cities and missing others.

Beware that the worst mischief for you in my view is the mischief of Banú Umayyah, because it is blind and also creates darkness. Its sway is general but its ill effects are for particular people. He who remains clear-sighted in it would be affected by distress, and he who remains blind in it would avoid the distress. By Alláh. you will find Banú Umayyah after me worst people for yourselves, like the old unruly she-camel who bites with its mouth, beats with its fore-legs, kicks with its hind legs and refuses to be milked. They would remain over you till they would leave among you only those who benefit them or those who do not harm them. Their calamity would continue till your seeking help from them would become like the seeking of help by the slave from his master or of the follower from the leader.

Their mischief would come to you like evil eyed fear and pre-Islamic fragments, wherein there would be no minaret of guidance nor any sign (of salvation) to be seen. We *Ahlu'l-bayt* (the Household of the Prophet) are free from this mischief and we are not among those who would engender it. Thereafter, Alláh would dispel it from you like the removal of the skin (from flesh) through him who would humble them, drag them by necks, make them drink full cups (of hardships), not extend them anything but sword and not clothe them save with fear. At that time Quraysh would wish at the cost of the world and all its contents to find me even only once and just for the duration of the slaughter of a camel in order that I may accept from them (the whole of) that of which at present I am asking them only a part but they are not giving me.

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(1). Amír al-mu'minín delivered this sermon after the battle of Nahrawán. In it, mischief imply the battles fought in Basrah, Siffín and Nahrawán because their nature was different from the battles of the Prophet. There the opposite party were the unbelievers while here the confrontation was with those who had veils of Islam on their faces. So people were hesitant to fight against Muslims, and asked why they should fight with those who recited the call to the prayers and offered the prayers. Thus, Khuzaymah ibn Thábit al-Ansarí did not take part in the Battle of Siffín till the falling of `Ammár ibn Yásir as martyr did not prove that the opposite party was rebellious. Similarly the presence of companions like Talhah and az-Zubayr who were included in the "Foretold Ten" on the side of `Á'ishah in Basrah, and the prayer signs on foreheads of the Khárijites in Nahrawán and their prayers and worships were creating confusion in the minds. In these circumstances only those could have the courage to rise against them were aware of the secrets of their hearts and the reality of their faith. It was the peculiar perception of Amír al-mu'minín and his spiritual courage that he rose to oppose them, and testified the saying of the Holy Prophet:

> You will fight after me with the breakers of allegiance (people of Jamal), oppressors (people of Syria) and deviators (the Khárijites). (*al-Mustadrak `alá as-Sahíhayn, al-hákim*, vol.3, p.l39,140; *ad-Durr al-manthúr*, vol.6, p.l8; al-Ist`áb, vol.3, p.1117; *Usd al-ghábah*, vol.4 pp.32,33; *Táríkh Baghdád*, vol.8, p.340; vol.13, pp.186,187; *at-Táríkh*, Ibn `Asákir, vol. 5, p. 41; *at-Táríkh*, Ibn Kathír, vol.7, pp.304,305,306; Majma` az-zawá'id, vol.7,

p.238; vol.9, p.235; *Sharh al-mawáhib*, vol.3, pp.316-317; *Kanz al-`ummál*, vol. 6, pp.72,82,88,155,319,391,392; vol. 8, p.215)

(2). After the Holy Prophet no one save Amír al-mu'minín could utter the challenge "Ask whatever you want to." Ibn `Abd al-Barr in *Jámi` bayán al-`ilm wa fa_lihi*, vol.1 p.58 and in *al-Istí`áb*, vol.3, p.l103; Ibn al-Athír in *Usd al-ghábah*, vol.4, p.22; Ibn Abi'l-Hadíd in *Sharh Nahj al-balághah*, vol.7, p.46; as-Suyútí in *Tárikh al-Khulafá'*, p.171 and Ibn Hajar al-Haytamí in *as-Sawa`iq al-muhriqah*, p.76 have written that "None among the companions of the Holy Prophet ever said 'Ask me whatever you want to' except `Alí ibn Abí Tálib." However, among other than the companions a few names do appear in history who did utter such a challenge, such as Ibráhím ibn Hishám al-Makhzúmí, Muqátil ibn Sulaymán, Qatádah ibn Di`ámah, `Abd ar-Rahmán (Ibn al-Jawzí) and Muhammad ibn Idrís ash-Sháfi`í etc. but everyone of them had to face disgrace and was forced to take back his challenge. This challenge can be urged only by him who knows the realities of the Universe and is aware of the happenings of the future. Amír al-mu'minín, the opener of the door of the Prophet's knowledge, as he was, was the only person who was never seen being unable to answer any question on any occasion, so much so that even Caliph `Umar had to say that "I seek Alláh's protection from the difficulty for the solution of which `Alí would not be available." Similarly, the prophecies of Amír al-mu'minín made about the future proved true word by word and served as an index to his vast knowledge, whether they be about the devastation of Banú Ummayyah or the rising of the Khárijites, the wars and destruction by the Tartars or the attacks of the English, the floods of Basrah of the ruination of Kúfah. In short, when these events are historical realities there is no reason why this challenge of Amír al-mu'minín should be wondered at.

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SERMON 93

Alláh's praise and eulogy of the prophets

Exalted is Alláh Whom heights of daring cannot approach and fineness of intelligence cannot find. He is such First that there is no extremity for Him so that He be contained within it, nor is there an end for Him where would cease.

A part of the same sermon about the Prophet

Alláh kept the Prophets in deposit in the best place of deposit and made them stay in the best place of stay. He moved them in succession from distinguished fore-fathers to chaste wombs. Whenever a predecessor from among them died the follower stood up for the cause of the religion of Alláh.

About the Holy Prophet and his Descendants (`Itrah)

Until this distinction of Alláh, the Glorified, reached Muhammad - peace and blessing of Alláh be upon him and his descendants. Alláh brought him out from the most distinguished sources of origin and the most honourable places of planting, namely from the same (lineal) tree from which He brought forth other Prophets and from which He selected His trustees. Muhammad's descendants are the best descendants, his kinsmen the best of kin and his lineal tree the best of trees. It grew in esteem and rose in distinction. It has tall branches and unapproachable fruits.

He is the leader (Imám) of all who exercise fear (of Alláh) and a light for those who seek guidance. He is a lamp whose flame is burning, a meteor whose light is shining and a flint whose spark is bright. His conduct is upright, his behaviour is guiding, his speech is decisive and his decision is just. Alláh sent him after an interval from the previous Prophets when people had fallen into errors of action and ignorance. Alláh may have mercy on you.

May Alláh shower His mercy on you ! Do act according to the clear signs, because the way is straight and leads to the house of safety while you are in the place of seeking Alláh's favour, and have time and opportunity. The books (of your doings) are open and pens (of angels) are busy (to record your actions) while your bodies are healthy, tongues are free, repentance is accepted and deeds are accorded recognition.

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SERMON 94

About the condition of the people at the time of the Prophet's proclamation and his actions to do with the dissemination of his message

Alláh sent the Prophet at a time when the people were going astray in perplexity and were moving here and there in mischief. Desires had deflected them and self-conceit had swerved them. Extreme ignorance had made them foolish. They were confounded by the unsteadiness of matters and the evils of ignorance. Then the Prophet - blessing of Alláh be upon him and his descendants - did his best in giving them sincere advice, himself trod on the right path and called (them) towards wisdom and good counsel.

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SERMON 95

In eulogy of the Holy Prophet

Praise be to Alláh who is such First that nothing is before Him and such Last that there is nothing after Him. He is such Manifest that there is nothing above Him and such Hidden that there is nothing nearer than He.

A part of the same sermon about the Holy Prophet

His place of stay is the best of all places and his origin the noblest of all origins in the mines of honour and the cradles of safety. Hearts of virtuous persons have been inclined towards him and the reins of eyes have been turned towards him. Through him Alláh buried mutual rancour and put off the flames of revolt. Through him He gave them affection like brothers and separated those who were together (through unbelief). Through him He gave honour to the low and degraded honour (of unbelief). His speaking is clear and his silence is (indicative) like tongue.

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SERMON 96 (1)

Admonishing his own companions

Although Alláh gives time to the oppressor, His catch would not spare him. Alláh watches him on the passage of his way and the position of that which suffocates the throats.

By Alláh in Whose power my life lies, these people (Mu`áwiyah and his men) will overcome you not because they have a better right than you but because of their hastening towards the wrong with their leader and your slowness about my right (to be followed). People are afraid of the oppression of their rulers while I fear the oppression of my subjects.

I called you for war but you did not come. I warned you but you did not listen. I called you secretly as well as openly, but you did not respond. I gave you sincere counsel, but you did not accept it. Are you present like the absent, and slaves like masters? I recite before you points of wisdom but you turn away from them, and I advise you with far reaching advice but you disperse away from it. I rouse you for *jihád* against the people of revolt but before I come to the end of my speech, I see you disperse like the sons of Sabá.(2) You return to your places and deceive one another by your counsel. I straighten you in the morning but you are back to me in the evening as curved as the back of a bow. The sraightener has become weary while those to be straightened have become incorrigible.

O' those whose bodies are present but wits are absent, and whose wishes are scattered. Their rulers are on trial. Your leader obeys Alláh but you disobeyed him while the leader of the people of Syria (ash-Shám) disobeys Alláh but they obey him. By Alláh, I wish Mu`áwiyah exchanges with me like Dinars with Dirhams, so that he takes from me ten of you and gives me one from them.

O' people of Kúfah, I have experienced in you three things and two others: you are deaf in spite of having ears, dumb in spite of speaking, and blind in spite of having eyes. You are neither true supporters in combat nor dependable brothers in distress. Your hands may be soiled with earth. O' examples of those camels whose herdsman has disappeared, if they are collected together from one side they disperse from the other. By Alláh, I see you in my imagination that if war becomes intense and action is in full swing you would run away from the son of Abí Tálib like the woman who becomes naked in the front. I am certainly on clear guidance from my Lord (Alláh) and on the path of my Prophet and I am on the right path which I adhere to regularly.

About the Household of the Holy Prophet

Look at the people of the Prophet's family. Adhere to their direction. Follow their footsteps because they would never let you out of guidance, and never throw you into destruction. If they sit down, you sit down, and if they rise up you rise up. Do not go ahead of them, as you would thereby go astray and go not lag behind of them as you would thereby be ruined.

I have seen the companions of the Prophet but I do not find anyone resembling them. They began the day with dust on the hair and face (in hardship of life) and passed the night in prostration and standing in prayers. Sometimes they put down their foreheads and sometimes their cheeks. With the recollection of their resurrection it seemed as though they stood on live coal. It seemed that in between their eyes there were signs like knees of goats, resulting from long prostrations. When Alláh was mentioned their eyes flowed freely till their shirt collars were drenched. They trembled for fear of punishment and hope of reward as the tree trembles on the day of stormy wind.

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(1). In the atmosphere that had been created soon after the Prophet the *Ahlu'l-bayt* (members of his family) had no course except to remain secluded as a result of which world has remained ignorant of their real qualities and unacquainted with their teachings and attainments, and to belittle them and keeping them away from authority has been considered as the greatest service to Islam. If `Uthmán's open misdeeds had not given a chance to the Muslims to wake up and open their eyes there would have been no question of allegiance to Amír al-mu'minín and temporal authority would have retained the same course as it had so far followed. But all those who could be named for the purpose had no courage to come forward because of their own shortcomings while Mu`áwiyah was sitting in his capital away from the centre. In these circumstances there was none except Amír al-mu'minín who could be looked at. Consequently people's eyes hovered around him and the same common people who, following the direction of the

wind, had been swearing allegiance to others jumped at him for swearing allegiance. Nevertheless, this allegiance was not on the count that they regarded his Caliphate as from Alláh and him as an Imám (Divine Leader) to obey whom was obligatory. It was rather under their own principles which were known as democratic or consultative. However, there was one group who was swearing allegiance to him as a religious obligation regarding his Caliphate as determined by Alláh. Otherwise, the majority regarded him a ruler like the other Caliphs, and as regards precedence, on the fourth position, or at the level of the common men after the three caliphs. Since the people, the army, and the civil servants had been impressed by the beliefs and actions of the previous rulers and immersed in their ways whenever they found anything against their liking they fretted and frowned, evaded war and were ready to rise in disobedience and revolt. Further, just as among those who fought in *jihád* with the Prophet there were some seekers of this world and others of the next world, in the same way here too there was no dearth of worldly men who were, in appearance, with Amír al-mu'minín but actually they had connections with Mu`áwiyah who has promised some of them positions and had extended to others temptation of wealth. To hold them as Shí`ahs of Amír al-mu'minín and to blame Shí`ism for this reason is closing the eyes to facts, because the beliefs of these people would be the same as of those who regarded Amír al-mu'minín fourth in the series. Ibn Abi'l-hadíd throws light on the beliefs of these persons in clear words:

> Whoever observes minutely the events during the period of Caliphate of Amír al-mu'minín would know that Amír al-mu'minín had been brought to bay because those who knew his real position were very few, and the swarming majority did not bear that belief about him which was obligatory to have. They gave precedence to the previous Caliphs over him and held that the criterion of precedence was Caliphate, and in this matter those coming later followed the predecessors, and argued that if the predecessors had not the knowledge that the previous Caliphs had precedence over Amír al-mu'minín they would not have preferred them to him. Rather, these people knew and took Amír al-mu'minín as a citizen and subject. Most of those who fought in his company did so on grounds of prestige or Arab partisanship, not on the ground of religion or belief. (*Sharh Nahj al-balághah,* vol.7, p.72)

(2). The progeny of Sabá' ibn Yashjub ibn Ya`rub ibn Qahtán is known as the tribe of Sabá'. When these people began to falsify prophets then to shake them Alláh sent to them a flood of water by which their gardens were submerged and they left their houses and property to settle down in different cities. This proverb arose out of this event and it is now applied wherever people so disperse that there can be no hope of their joining together again.

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SERMON 97

Oppression of the Umayyads

By Alláh, they would continue like this till there would be left no unlawful act before Alláh but they would make it lawful and no pledge but they would break it, and till there would remain no house of bricks or of woollen tents but their oppression would enter it. Their bad dealings would make them wretched, till two groups of crying complainants would rise, one would cry for his religion and the other for this world and the help of one of you to one of them would be like the help of a slave to his master, namely when he is present he obeys him, but when the master is away he backbites him. The highest among you in distress would be he who bear best belief about Alláh. If Alláh grants you safety accept it, and if you are put in trouble endure it, because surely (good) result is for the God-fearing.

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SERMON 98

About abstinence of the world and vicissitudes of time

We praise Alláh for what has happened and seek His succour in our affairs for what is yet to happen, and we beg Him for safety in the faith just as we beg Him for safety in our bodies.

O' creatures of Alláh! I advise you to keep away from this world which is (shortly) to leave you even though you do not like its departure, and which would make your bodies old even though you would like to keep them fresh. Your example and its example is like the travellers who travel some distance and then as though they traverse it quickly or they aimed at a sign and reached it at once. How short is the distance to the aim if one heads towards it and reaches it. And how short is the stage of one who has only a day which he cannot exceed while a swift driver is driving him in this world till he departs from it.

So do not hanker after worldly honour and its pride, and do not feel happy over its beauties and bounties nor wail over its damages and misfortunate because its honour and pride would end while its beauty and bounty would perish, and its damages and misfortunes would pass away. Every period in it has an end and every living being in it is to die. Is not there for you a warning in the relics of the predecessors and an eye opener and lesson in your fore-fathers, provided you understand?

Do you not see that your predecessors do not come back and the surviving followers do not remain? Do you not observe that the people of the world pass mornings and evenings in different conditions? Thus, (somewhere) the dead is wept for, someone is being condoled, someone is prostrate in distress, someone is enquiring about the sick, someone is passing his last breath, someone is hankering after the world while death is looking for him, someone is forgetful but he is not forgotten (by death), and on the footsteps of the predecessors walk the survivors.

Beware! At the time of committing evil deeds remember the destroyer of joys, the spoiler of pleasures, and the killer of desires (namely death). Seek assistance of Alláh for fulfilment of His obligatory rights, and for (thanking Him) for His countless bounties and obligations.

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SERMON 99

About the Holy Prophet and his Descendants

Praise be to Alláh Who spreads His bounty throughout the creation, and extends His hand of generosity among them. We praise Him in all His affairs and seek His assistance for fulfilment of His rights. We stand witness that there is no god except He and that Muhammad (p.b.u.h.a.h.p.) is His slave and Prophet. He sent him to manifest His commands and speak about His remembrance. Consequently, he fulfilled it with trustworthiness, and he passed away while on the right path.

He left among us the standard of right. Whoever goes further from it goes out of Faith, whoever lags behind it is ruined. Whoever sticks to it would join (the right). Its guide is short of speech, slow of steps, and quick when he rises. When you have bent your necks before him and pointed towards him with your fingers his death would occur and would take him away. They would live after him as long as Alláh wills, till Alláh brings out for you one who would collect you together and fuse you after diffusion. Do not place expectations in one who does not(1) come forward and do not lose hope in one who is veiled, because it is possible that one of the two feet of the veiled one may slip while the other may remain sticking, till both return to position and stick.

Beware! The example of the descendant (Ál) of Muhammad - peace and blessing of Alláh be upon him and his descendants - is like that of stars in the sky. When one star sets another one rises. So you are in a position that Alláh’s blessings on you have been perfected and He has shown you what you used to wish for.

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(1). The implication is that if for the time being your expectations are not being fulfilled, you should not be disappointed. It is possible matters may improve, the impediments in the way of improvement may be removed and matters may be settled as you wish.

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SERMON 100

About the vicissitudes of time

He (Alláh) is the First before every first and the Last after every last. His Firstness necessitates that there is no (other) first before Him and His Lastness necessitates that there is no other last after Him. I do stand witness that there is no god but Alláh both openly as well as secretly, with heart as well as with tongue.

O' people, do not commit the crime of opposing me, do not be seduced into disobeying me and do not wink at each other with eyes when you hear me. By Alláh, Who germinates the seed and blows the wind, whatever I convey to you is from the Prophet. Neither the conveyor (of Alláh's message, i.e. the Prophet) lied nor the hearer misunderstood.

Well, it is as though I see a misguided man(1) who is shouting in Syria (ash-Shám) and has put his banners in the out-skirt of Kúfah. When his mouth would be fully opened, his recalcitrance would become intense and his steps on earth would become heavy (and tyrannical) then the disorder (so created) would cut the people with its teeth and war would rage with (all) its waves, days would become severe and night full of toil. So when the crops grows and stands on stalks, its foam shoots forth and its lightning shines, the banners of misguiding rebellion would fire up and shoot forth like darkening night and surging sea. This and how many other storms would rend Kúfah and gales would sweep over it, and shortly heads would clash with heads, the standing crop would be harvested and the harvest would be smashed.

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(1). Some people have taken this to refer to Mu`áwiyah and others to `Abd al-Malik ibn Marwán.

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SERMON 101

On the same subject - Day of Judgement

That day would be such that Alláh would collect on it the anteriors and the posteriors, to stand in obedience for exaction of accounts and for award of recompense for deeds. Sweat would flow upto their mouths like reins while the earth would be trembling under them. In the best condition among them would be he who has found a resting place for both his feet and an open place for his breath.

A part of the same sermon about future troubles (fitan)

The troubles are like a dark night. Horses would not stand for (facing) them nor would their banners turn back. They would approach in full reins and ready with saddles. Their leader would be driving them and the rider would be exerting (them). The trouble-mongers are a people whose attacks are severe. Those who would fight them for the sake of Alláh would be a people who are low in the estimation of the proud, unknown in the earth but well known on the sky. Woe to you O' Basrah, when an army of Alláh's infliction would face upon you without (raising) dust of cries. Your inhabitants would then face bloody death and dire hunger.

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SERMON 102

About abstemiousness and fear of Alláh

O' people! look at the world like those who abstain from it, and turn away from it. By Alláh, it would shortly turn out its inhabitants and cause grief to the happy and the safe. That which turns and goes away from it never returns and that which is likely to come about is not known or anticipated. Its joy is mingled with grief. Herein men's firmness inclines towards weakness and languidness. The majority of what pleases you here should not mislead you because that which would help you would be little.

Alláh may shower His mercy on him who ponders and takes lesson thereby, and when he takes lesson he achieves enlightenment. Whatever is present in this world would shortly not exist, while whatever is to exist in the next world is already in existence. Every countable thing would pass away. Every anticipation should be taken to be coming up and every thing that is to come up should be taken as just near.

A part of the same sermon on the attributes of a learned person

Learned is he who knows his worth. It is enough for a man to remain ignorant if he knows not his worth. Certainly, the most hated man with Alláh is he whom Alláh has left for his own self. He goes astray from the right path, and moves without a guide. If he is called to the plantation of this world he is active, but if he is called to the plantation of the next world he is slow. As though what he is active for is obligatory upon him whereas in whatever he is slow was not required of him.

A part of the same sermon concerning future times

There would be a time wherein only a sleeping (inactive) believer would be safe (such that) if he is present he is not recognised but if he is absent he is not sought after. These are the lamps of guidance and banners of night journeys. They do not spread calumnies nor divulge secrets, nor slander. They are those for whom Alláh would open the doors of His mercy and keeps off from them the hardships of His chastisement.

O' people! a time will come to you when Islam would be capsized as a pot is capsized with all its contents. O' people, Alláh has protected you from that He might be hard on you but He has not spared you from being put on trial. Alláh the Sublimest of all speakers has said:

Verily in this are signs and We do only try (the people). (Qur'án, 23:30)

as-Sayyid ar-Radí says: As regards Amír al-mu'minín's words *"kullu mu'minin nuwamah"* (every sleeping believer), he implies thereby one who is talked of little and causes no evil. And the word *"al-masáyíh"* is the plural of *"misyáh"*. He is one who spreads trouble among people through evils and calumnies. And the word *"al-madháyí"* is the plural of *"midhyá".* He is one who on hearing of an evil about some one spreads it and shouts about it. And *"al-budhur"* is the plural of *"badhúr".* He is one who excels in foolishness and speaks rubbish.

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SERMON 103

About the condition of the people before the proclamation of prophethood and the Prophet's performance in spreading his message

So now, certainly Alláh deputised Muhammad (p.b.u.h.a.h.p.) as the Prophet while no one among the Arabs read the Book nor claimed prophethood or revelation. He had to fight those who disobeyed him in company with those who followed him, leading them towards their salvation and hastening with them lest death overtook them. When any weary person sighed or a distressed one stopped he stood at him till he got him his aim, except the worst in whom there was not virtue at all. Eventually he showed them their goal and carried them to their places (of deliverance). Consequently, their affairs moved on and their hand-mill began to rotate (i.e. position gained strength), their spears got straightened.

By Alláh, I was among their rear-guard till they turned back on their sides and were flocked in their rope. I never showed weakness or lack of courage, nor did I betray or become languid. By Alláh, I shall split the wrong till I extract right from its flanks.

as-Sayyid ar-Radí says: I have quoted a selected part of this sermon before, but since I have found in the narration that this part differs from the previous one, more or less, I deemed it necessary to quote it again here.

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SERMON 104

In eulogy of the Holy Prophet

Then Alláh deputised Muhammad (p.b.u.h.a.h.p.) as a witness, giver of good tidings and warner, the best in the universe as a child and the most chaste as a grown up man, the purest of the purified in conduct, the most generous of those who are approached for generosity.

About the Ummayads

This world did not appear sweet to you in its pleasures and you did not secure milk from its udders except after having met it when its nose-rein was trailing and its leather girth was loose. For certain people its unlawful items were like bent branches (laden with fruit) while its lawful items were far away, not available. By Alláh, you would find it like a long shade upto a fixed time. So the earth is with you without let or hindrance and your hands in it are extended while the hands of the leaders are held away from you. Your swords are hanging over them while their swords are held away from you.

Beware that for every blood (that is shed) there is an avenger and for every right there is a claimant. The avenger for our blood is like the judge for his own claim, and it is Alláh who is such that if one seeks Him, then He does not disappoint him, and one who runs away from Him cannot escape Him. I swear by Alláh, O' Banú Umayyah, shortly you will see it (i.e. your possession) in the hands of others and in the house of your enemy. Know that the best looking eye is that whose sight catches virtue and know that the best hearing ear is that which hears good advice and accepts it.

About the functions of the Imáms

O' people, secure light from the flame of lamps of the preacher who follows what he preaches and draw water from the spring which has been cleaned of dirt.

O' creatures of Alláh, do not rely on your ignorance, do not be obedient to your desires, because he who stays at this place is like one who stays on the brink of a bank undermined by water carrying ruin on his back from one portion to the other following his opinion which he changes (one after the other). He wants to make adhere what cannot adhere and to bring together what cannot keep together. So fear Alláh and do not place your complaints before him who cannot redress your grievance, nor undo with his opinion what has been made obligatory for you.

Certainly, there is no obligation on the Imám except what has been devolved on him from Alláh, namely to convey warnings, to exert in good advice, to revive the *sunnah*, to enforce penalties on those liable to them and to issue shares to the deserving. So hasten towards knowledge before its vegetation dries up and before you turn yourselves away from seeking knowledge from those who have it. Desist others from the unlawful and abstain from it yourself, because you have been commanded to abstain (yourself) before abstaining (others).

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SERMON 105

About Islam

Praise be to Alláh who established Islam and made it easy for those who approach it and gave strength to its columns against any one who tries to overpower it. So Alláh made it (a source of) peace for him who clings to it, safety for him who enters it, argument for him who speaks about it, witness for him who fights with its help, light for him who seeks light from it, understanding for him who provides it, sagacity for him who exerts, a sign (of guidance) for him who perceives, sight for him who resolves, lesson for him who seeks advice, salvation for him who testifies, confidence for him who trusts, pleasure for him who entrusts, and shield for him who endures.

It is the most bright of all paths, the clearest of all passages. It has dignified minarets, bright highways, burning laps, prestigious field of activity, and high objective. It has a collection of race horses. It is approached eagerly. Its riders are honourable. Testimony (of Alláh, Prophet etc.) is its way, good deeds are its minarets, death is its extremity, this world is its race-course, the Day of Judgement is its horses and Paradise is its point of approach.

A part of the same sermon about the Holy Prophet

The Prophet lighted flames for the seeker and put bright signs for the impeded. So he is Thy trustworthy trustee, Thy witness on the Day of Judgement, Thy deputy as a blessing and Thy messenger of truth as mercy. My Alláh distribute to him a share from Thy Justice and award him multiples of good by Thy bounty. My Alláh heighten his construction over the constructions of others, honour him when he comes to Thee, dignify his position before Thee, give him honourable position, and award him glory and distinction, and bring us out (on the Day of Judgement) among his party, neither ashamed, nor repentant, nor deviators, nor pledge-breakers, nor strayers, nor misleaders. nor seduced.

as-Sayyid ar-Radí says: This sermon had already appeared earlier but we have repeated it here because of the difference between the two versions.

A part of the same sermon addressed to his followers

By bounty of Alláh over you, you have acquired a position where even your slave maids are honoured, your neighbours are treated well. Even he over whom you enjoy no distinction or obligation honours you. Even those people fear you who had no apprehension of attack from you or any authority over you. You now see pledges to Alláh being broken but do not feel enraged although you fret and frown on the breaking of the traditions of your forefathers. Alláh's matters have been coming to you, and going from and again coming back to you; but you have made over your place to wrong-doers and thrown towards them your responsibilities, and have placed Alláh's affairs in their hands. They act in doubts and tread in (fulfilment of) desires. By Alláh, even if they disperse you under every star Alláh would surely collect you on the day that would be worst for them.

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SERMON 106

Delivered during one of the days of Siffín

I have seen your flight and your dispersal from the lines. You were surrounded by rude and low people and Bedouins of Syria (ash-Shám), although you are the chiefs of Arabs and summit of distinction, and possess dignity as that of the high nose and big hump of the camel. The sigh of my bosom can subside only when I eventually see you surrounding them as they surrounded you, and see you dislodging them from their position as they dislodged you, killing them with arrows and striking them with spears so that their forward rows might fall on the rear ones just like the thirsty camels who have been turned away from their place of drink and removed from their water-points.

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SERMON 107

It is one of the sermons about the vicissitudes of time

Praise be to Alláh Who is Manifest before His creation because of themselves. Who is apparent to their hearts because of clear proof; Who created without meditating, since meditating does not befit except one who has thinking organs while He has no thinking organ in Himself. His knowledge has split forth the inside of unknown secrets and covered the bottom of deep beliefs.

A part of the same sermon about the Holy Prophet

Alláh chose him from the lineal tree of prophets, from the flame of light, from the forehead of greatness, from the best part of the valley of al-Bat'há', from the lamps for darkness, and from the sources of wisdom.

A part of the same sermon

The Prophet was like a roaming physician who has set ready his ointments and heated his instruments. He uses them wherever the need arises for curing blind hearts, deaf ears, and dumb tongues. He followed with his medicines the spots of negligence and places of perplexity.

Blaming Muslims

They (people) did not take light from the lights of his wisdom nor did they produce flame from the flint of sparkling knowledge . So in this matter they are like grazing cattle and hard stones. Nevertheless, hidden things have appeared for those who perceive, the face of right has become clear for the wanderer, the approaching moment has raised the veil from its face and signs have appeared for those who search for them.

What is the matter with me! I see you just bodies without spirits and spirits without bodies, devotees without good, traders without profits, wakeful but sleeping, present but unseen, seeing but blind, hearing but deaf and speaking but dumb.

I notice that misguidance has stood on its centre and spread (all round) through its off-shoots. It weighs you with its weights and confuses you with its measures. Its leader is an out-cast from the community. He persists on misguidance. So on that day none from among you would remain except as the sediment in a cooking pot or the dust left after dusting a bundle. It would scrape you as leather is scraped, and trample you as harvest is trampled, and pick out the believer as a bird picks out a big grain from the thin grain.

Where are these ways taking you, gloom misleading you, and falsehoods deceiving you? Whence are you brought and where are you driven? For every period there is a written document and everyone who is absent has to return. So listen to your godly leader and keep your hearts present. If he speaks to you be wakeful. The forerunner must speak truth to his people, should keep his wits together and maintain presence of mind. He has clarified to you the matter as the stitch-hole is cleared, and scraped it as the gum is scraped (from the twigs).

Nevertheless, now the wrong has set itself on its places and ignorance has ridden on its riding beasts. Unruliness has increased while the call for virtue is suppressed. Time has pounced upon like a devouring carnivore, and wrong is shouting like a camel after remaining silent. People have become brothers over ill-doings. have forsaken religion, are united in speaking lie but bear mutual hatred in the matter of truth.

When such is the case, the son would be a source of anger (instead of coolness of the eye to parents) and rain the cause of heat, the wicked would abound and the virtuous would diminish. The people of this time would be wolves, its rulers beasts, the middle class men gluttons and the poor (almost) dead. Truth would go down, falsehood would overflow, affection would be claimed with tongues but people would be quarrelsome at heart. Adultery would be the key to lineage while chastity would be rare and Islam would be worn overturned like the skin.

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SERMON 108

About the Might of Alláh

Everything submits to Him and everything exists by Him. He is the satisfaction of every poor, dignity of the low, energy for the weak and shelter for the oppressed. Whoever speaks, He hears his speaking, and whoever keeps quiet, He knows his secret. On Him is the livelihood of everyone who lives, and to Him returns whoever dies.

(O' Alláh!) The eyes have not seen Thee so as to be aware of Thee, but Thou wert before the describers of Thy creation. Thou didst not create the creation on account of loneliness, nor didst make them work for gain. He whom Thou catchest cannot go farther than Thee, and he whom Thou holdest cannot escape Thee. He who disobeys Thee does not decrease Thy authority, and he who obeys Thee does not add to Thy Might. He who disagrees with Thy judgement cannot turn it, and he who turns away from Thy command cannot do without Thee. Every secret before Thee is open and for Thee every absent is present.

Thou art everlasting, there is no end to Thee. Thou art the highest aim, there is no escape from Thee, Thou art the promised (point of return) from which there is no deliverance except towards Thee. In Thy hand is the forelock of every creature and to Thee is the return of every living being. Glory to Thee! How great is Thy creation that we see, but how small is this greatness by the side of Thy Might. How awe-striking is Thy realm that we notice, but how humble is this against what is hidden from us out of Thy authority. How extensive are Thy bounties in this world, but how small are they against the bounties of the next world.

A part of the same sermon about the Angels

Thou (O' Alláh) made angels reside in Thy skies and place them high above from Thy earth. They have the most knowledge about Thee and Thy whole creation, the most fearing from Thee, and the nearest to Thee. They never stayed in loins nor were retained in wombs. They were not created "*from mean water* (semen)" (Qur'án , 32:8; 77:20). They were not dispersed by vicissitudes of time. They are on their places (distinct) from Thee and in their positions near Thee. Their desires are concentrated in Thee. Their worship for Thee is much. Their neglect from Thy command is little. If they witness what remains hidden about Thee they would regard their deeds as very little, they would criticise themselves and would realise that they did not worship Thee according to Thy right for being worshipped and did not obey Thee as Thou hast the right of being obeyed.

About the bounties and guidance of Alláh,
and those who are ungrateful

Glorified art Thou, the Creator, the Worshipped, on account of Thy good trials of Thy creatures. Thou created a house (the Paradise) and provided in it for feasting, drinks, foods, spouses, servants, places, streams, plantations and fruits. Then Thou sent a messenger to invite towards it, but the people did not respond to the caller, and did not feel persuaded to what Thou persuaded them nor showed eagerness towards what Thou desired them to feel eager. They jumped on the carcass (of this world), earned shame by eating it and became united on loving it.

When one loves a thing it blinds him and sickens his heart. Then he sees but with a diseased eye, hears but with unhearing ears. Desires have cut asunder his wit, and the world has made his heart dead, while his mind is all longing for it. Consequently, he is a slave of it and of everyone who has any share in it. Wherever it turns, he turns towards it and wherever it proceeds, he proceeds towards it. He is not desisted by any desister from Alláh, nor takes admonition from any preacher. He sees those who have been caught in neglect whence there is neither rescission nor reversion.

About Death

Whatever they were ignoring has befallen them, separation from this world, from which they took themselves safe, has come to them and they have reached that in the next world which they had been promised. Whatever has befallen them cannot be described. Pangs of death and grief for losing (this world) have surrounded them. Consequently, their limbs become languid and their complexion changes. Then death increases its struggle over them.

In some one it stands in between him and his power of speaking although he lies among his people, looking with eyes, hearing with his ears, with full wits and intelligence. He then thinks over how he wasted his life and in what

(activities) he passed his time. He recalls the wealth he collected when he had blinded himself in seeking it, and acquired it from fair and foul sources. Now the consequences of collecting it have overtaken him. He gets ready to leave it. It would remain for those who are behind him. They would enjoy it and benefit by it.

It would be an easy acquisition for others but a burden on his back, and the man cannot get rid of it. He would thereupon bite his hands with teeth out of shame for what was disclosed to him about his affairs at the time of his death. He would dislike what he coveted during the days of his life and would wish that he who envied him on account of it and felt jealous over him for it should have amassed it instead of he himself.

Death would go on affecting his body till his ears too would behave like his tongue (and lose functioning). So he would lie among his people, neither speaking with his tongue or hearing with his ears. He would be rotating his glance over their faces, watching the movements of their tongues, but not hearing their speaking. Then death would increase its sway over him, and his sight would be taken by death as the ears had been taken and the spirit would depart from his body. He would then become a carcass among his own people. They would feel loneliness from him and get away from near him. He would not join a mourner or respond to a caller. Then they would carry him to a small place in the ground and deliver him in it to (face) his deeds. They abandoned visiting him.

About the Day of Judgement

Till whatever is written as ordained approaches its end, the affairs complete their destined limits, the posteriors join the anteriors and whatever Alláh wills takes place in the shape of resurrection of His creation. Then He would convulse the sky and split it. He would quake the earth and shake it. He would root out the mountains and scatter them. They would crush each other out of awe of His Glory and fear of His Dignity.

He would take out everyone who is in it. He would refresh them after they had been worn out and collect them after they had been separated. Then He would set them apart for questioning about the hidden deeds and secret acts. He would then divide them into two groups, rewarding one and punishing the other. As regards the obedient people He would reward them with His nearness and would keep them for ever in His house from where those who settle therein do not move out. Their position would not undergo change, fear would not overtake them, ailments would not befall them, dangers would not affect them and journey would not force them (from place to place).

As for people of sins, He would settle them in the worst place would bind their hands with the necks, bind the forelocks with feet and would clothe them in shirts of tar and dresses cut out of flames. They would be in punishment whose heat would be severe, door would be closed on the inmates - in fire which is full of shouts and cries and rising flames and fearful voices. Its inmate does not move out of it. its prisoner cannot be released by ransom and its shackles cannot be cut. There is no fixed age for this house so that it might perish, nor period for its life that might pass away.

A part of the same sermon about the Holy Prophet

He treated this world disdainfully and regarded it low. He held it contemptible and hated it. He realised that Alláh kept it away from him with intention and spread it out for others by way of contempt. Therefore, he remained away from it by his heart, banished its recollection from his mind and wished that its attraction should remain hidden from his eye so that he should not acquire any clothing from it, or hope for staying in it. He conveyed from Alláh the pleas (against committing sins), counselled his people as a warner (against Divine chastisement) and called (people) towards Paradise as a conveyor of good tidings.

About the Descendants of the Holy Prophet

We are the tree of prophethood, staying place of (Divine) Message, descending place of angels, mines of knowledge and the sources of wisdom. Our supporter and lover awaits mercy while our enemy and he who hates us awaits wrath.

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SERMON 109

About Islam

The best means by which seekers of nearness to Alláh, the Glorified, the Exalted, seek nearness, is the belief in Him and His Prophet, fighting in His cause, for it is the high pinnacle of Islam, and (to believe) in the *kalimatu'l-'ikhlÁs* (the expression of Divine purification) for it is just nature and the establishment of prayer for it is (the basis of) community, payment of *zakát* (Islamic tax) for it is a compulsory obligation, fasting for the month of *Rama_án* for it is the shield against chastisement, the performance of *Hajj* of the House of Alláh (i. e . Ka`bah) and its *`umrah* (other than annual visit) for these two acts banish poverty and wash away sins, regard for kinship for it increases wealth and length of life, to giving alms secretly for it covers shortcomings, giving alms openly for it protects against a bad death and extending benefits (to people) for it saves from positions of disgrace.

About the Holy Qur'án and Sunnah

Go ahead with the remembrance of Alláh for it is the best remembrance, and long for that which He has promised to the pious, for His promise is the most true promise. Tread the course of the Prophet for it is the most distinguished course. Follow the *sunnah* of the Prophet for it is the most right of all behaviours. Learn the Qur'án for it is the fairest of discourses and understand it thoroughly for it is the best blossoming of hearts. Seek cure with its light for it is the cure for hearts. Recite it beautifully for it is the most beautiful narration. Certainly, a scholar who acts not according to his knowledge is like the off-headed ignorant who does not find relief from his ignorance, but on the learned the plea of Alláh is greater and grief more incumbent, and he is more blameworthy before Alláh.

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SERMON 110

Caution about this world

So now, certainly I frighten you from this world for it is sweet and green, surrounded by lusts, and liked for its immediate enjoyments. It excites wonder with small things, is ornamented with (false) hopes and decorated with deception. Its rejoicing does not last and its afflictions cannot be avoided. It is deceitful, harmful, changing, perishable, exhaustible, liable to destruction, eating away and destructive. When it reaches the extremity of desires of those who incline towards it and feel happy with it, the position is just what Alláh, the Glorified, says (in the Qur'án):

> *... like the water which send We down from heaven, and the herbage of the earth mingleth with it, then it becometh dry stubble which the winds scatter; for Alláh over all things hath power.* (18:45)

No person gets rejoicing from this world but tears come to him after it, and no one gets its comforts in the front but he has to face hardships in the rear. No one receives the light rain of ease in it but the heavy rain of distress pours upon him. It is just worthy of this world that in the morning it supports a man but in the evening it does not recognise him. If one side of it is sweet and pleasant the other side is bitter and distressing.

No one secures enjoyment from its freshness but he has to face hardship from its calamities. No one would pass the evening under the wing of safety but that his morning would be under the feathers of the wing-tip of fear. It is deceitful, and all that is there in it is deception. It is perishable and all that is on it is to perish. There is no good in its provisions except in piety. Whoever takes little from it collects much of what would give him safety, while one who takes much from it takes much of what would ruin him. He would shortly depart from his collection. How many people relied on it but it distressed them; (how many) felt peaceful with it but it tumbled them down; how many were prestigious but it made them low and how many were proud but it made them disgraceful.

Its authority is changing. Its life is dirty. Its sweet water is bitter. Its sweetness is like myrrh. Its foods are poisons. Its means are weak. The living in it is exposed to death; the healthy in it is exposed to disease. Its realm is (liable to be) snatched away. The strong in it is (liable to be) defeated and the rich is (liable to be) afflicted with misfortune. The neighbour in it is (liable to be) plundered.

Are you not (residing) in the houses of those before you, who were of longer ages, better traces, had bigger desires, were more in numbers and had greater armies. How they devoted themselves to the world and how they showed preference to it! Then they left it without any provision that could convey them through, or the back (of a beast for riding) to carry them.

Did you get the news that the world was ever generous enough to present ransom for them, or gave them any support or afforded them good company? It rather inflicted them with troubles, made them languid with calamities, molested them with catastrophes, threw them down on their noses, trampled them under hoofs and helped the vicissitudes of time against them. You have observed its strangeness towards those who went near it, acquired it and appropriated it, till they depart from it for good. Did it give them any provision other than starvation or make them stay in other than narrow places, or give them light other than gloom, or give them in the end anything other than repentance? Is this what you much ask for or remain satisfied with, or towards which you feel greedy? How bad is this abode for him who did not suspect it (to be so) and did not entertain fear from it?

You should know as you do know, that you have to leave it and depart from it. While in it, take lesson from those *"who proclaimed 'who is more powerful than we'"* (Qur'án , 41 :15) but they were carried to their graves, though not as riders. They were then made to stay in the graves, but not as guests. Graves were made for them from the surface of the ground. Their shrouds were made from earth. Old bones were made their neighbour. They are neighbours who do not answer a caller nor ward off trouble, nor pay heed to a mourner.

If they get rain they do not feel happy, and if they face famine they do not get disappointed. They are together but each one apart. They are close together but do not see each other. They are near but do not meet. They are enduring and have no hatred. They are ignorant and their malice has died away. There is no fear of trouble from them and no hope of their warding off (troubles). They have exchanged the back (surface) of the earth with its stomach (interior), vastness with narrowness, family with loneliness, and light with darkness. They have come to it (this world) as they had left it with bare feet and naked bodies. They departed from it with their acts towards the continuing life and everlasting house as Alláh has said:

. . . *As We caused the first creation, so will We get it return.* (It is) *a promise binding Us, verily We were doing it.* (Qur'án , 21 :104)

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SERMON 111

About the Angel of Death and depart of spirit

Do you feel when the Angel of Death enters a house, or do you see him when he takes out life of anyone? How does he take out the life of an embryo in the womb of his mother? Does he reach it through any part of her body or the spirit responded to his call with the permission of Alláh? Or does he stay with him in the mother's interior? How can he who is unable to describe a creature like this, describe Alláh?

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SERMON 112

About this world and its people

I warn you of the world for it is the abode of the unsteady. It is not a house for foraging. It has decorated itself with deception and deceives with its decoration. It is a house which is low before Alláh. So He has mixed its lawful with its unlawful, its good with its evil, its life with its death, and its sweetness with its bitterness. Alláh has not kept it clear for His lovers, nor has He been niggardly with it towards His foes. Its good is sparing. Its evil is ready at hand. Its collection would dwindle away. Its authority would be snatched away. Its habitation would face desolation. What is the good in a house which falls down like fallen construction or in an age which expires as the provision exhausts, or in time which passes like walking?

Include whatever Alláh has made obligatory on you in your demands. Ask from Him fulfilment of what He has asked you to do. Make your ears hear the call of death before you are called by death. Surely the hearts of the abstemious weep in this world even though they may (apparently) laugh, and their grief increases even though they may appear happy. Their hatred for themselves is much even though they may be envied for the subsistence they are allowed. Remembrance of death has disappeared from your hearts while false hopes are present in you. So this world has mastered you more than the next world, and the immediate end (of this world) has removed you away from the remote one (of the next life). You are brethren in the religion of Alláh. Dirty natures and bad conscience have separated you. Consequently you do not bear burdens of each other nor advise each other, nor spend on each other, nor love each other.

What is your condition? You feel satisfied with what little you have secured from this world while much of the next world of which you have been deprived does not grieve you. The little of this world which you lose pains you so much so that it becomes apparent in your faces, and in the lack of your endurance over whatever is taken away from you; as though this world is your permanent abode, and as though its wealth would stay with you for good. Nothing prevents anyone among you to disclose to his comrade the shortcomings he is afraid of, except the fear that the comrade would also disclose to him similar defects. You have decided together on leaving the next world and loving this world. Your religion has become just licking with the tongue. It is like the work of one who has finished his job and secured satisfaction of his master.

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SERMON 113

About abstemiousness, fear of Alláh and importance of providing for the next life

Praise be to Him Who makes praise followed by bounty and bounty with gratefulness. We praise Him on His bounties as on His trials. We seek His help against these hearts which are slow to obey what they have been commended but quick towards what they have been desisted from. We seek His forgiveness from that which His knowledge covers and His document preserves - knowledge which does not leave anything and a document which does not omit anything. We believe in Him like the belief of one who has seen the unknown and has attained the promised rewards - belief, the purity whereof keeps off from belief in partners of Alláh, and whose conviction removes doubt.

We stand witness that there is no god but Alláh, the One, Who has no partner for Him, and that Muhammad is His slave and His Prophet, Alláh may bless him and his descendants. These two testimonies heighten the utterance and raise the act. The scale wherein they would be placed would not be light while the scale from which they are removed would not become heavy.

Enjoining people to Piety

O’ creatures of Alláh! I advise you to have fear of Alláh which is the provision (for the next world) and with it is (your) return. The provision would take you (to your destination) and the return would be successful. The best one, who is able to make people listen has called towards it and the best listener has listened to it. So the caller has proclaimed and the listener has listened and preserved.

O’ creations of Alláh! certainly fear of Alláh has saved the lovers of Alláh from unlawful items and gave His dread to their hearts till their nights are passed in wakefulness and their noons in thirst. So they achieve comfort through trouble and copious watering through thirst. They regarded death to be near and therefore hastened towards (good) actions. They rejected their desires and so they kept death in their sight.

Then, this world is a place of destruction, tribulations, changes and lessons. As for destruction, the time has its bow pressed (to readiness) and its dart does not go amiss, its wound does not heal; it afflicts the living with death, the healthy with ailment and the safe with distress. It is an eater who is not satisfied and a drinker whose thirst is never quenched. As for tribulation, a man collects what he does not eat and builds wherein he does not live. Then he goes out to Alláh without carrying the wealth or shifting the building.

As for its changes, you see a pitiable man becoming enviable and an enviable man becoming pitiable. This is because the wealth has gone and misfortune has come to him. As for its lessons, a man reaches near (realisation of) his desires when (suddenly) the approach of his death cuts them; then neither the desire is achieved nor the desirer spared. Glory to Alláh, how deceitful are its pleasures, how thirst-rousing its quenching and how sunny its shade. That which approaches (i.e. death) cannot be sent back, he who goes away does not return. Glory to Alláh, how near is the living to the dead because he will meet him soon and how far is the dead from the living because he has gone away from him.

Certainly nothing is viler than evil except its punishment, and nothing is better than good except its reward. In this world everything that is heard is better than what is seen, while of everything of the next world that is seen is better than what is heard. So you should satisfy yourself by hearing rather than seeing and by the news of the unknown. You should know that what is little in this world but much in the next is better than what is much in this world but little in the next. In how many cases little is profitable while much causes loss.

Certainly that which you have been commanded to do is wider than what you have been refrained from, and what has been made lawful for you is more than what has been prohibited. Then give up what is less for what is much, and what is limited for what is vast. Alláh has guaranteed your livelihood and has commanded you to act. Therefore, the pursuit of that which has been guaranteed to you should not get preference over that whose performance has been enjoined upon you.

But by Alláh, most certainly the position is that doubt has overtaken and certainty has been shattered and it seems as if what has been guaranteed to you is obligatory on you and what was made obligatory on you has been taken away from you. So, hasten towards (good) actions and dread the suddenness of death, because the return of age cannot be hoped for, as the return of livelihood can be hoped for. Whatever is missed from livelihood today may be

hoped tomorrow with increase, but whatever is lost from the age yesterday, its return cannot be expected today. Hope can be only for that which is to come, while about that which is passed there is only disappointment. So *“fear Alláh as He ought to be feared and do not die until you are (true) Muslim.”* (Qur’án , 3:102)

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SERMON 114

Seeking rain

O’ my Alláh! surely our mountains have dried up and our earth has become dusty. Our cattle are thirsty and are bewildered in their enclosures. They are moaning like the moaning of mothers for their (dead) sons. They are tired of going to their meadows and longing for their watering places. O’ my Alláh! have mercy on the groan of the groaning and yearn of the yearning. O’ my Alláh! have mercy on their bewilderment and their passages and their groaning in their yards.

O’ my Alláh ! we have come out to Thee when the years of drought have crowded over us like (a herd of) thin camels, and rain clouds have abandoned us. Thou art the hope for the afflicted and succour for the seeker. We call Thee when the people have lost hopes, cloud has been denied and cattle have died, that do not seize us for our deeds and do not catch us for our sins, and spread Thy mercy over us through raining clouds, rain-fed blossoming, amazing vegetation, and heavy down-pours with which all that was dead regains life and all that was lost returns.

O’ my Alláh! give rain from Thee which should be life giving, satisfying, thorough, wide-scattered, purified, blissful, plentiful and invigorating. Its vegetation should be exuberant, its branches full of fruits and its leaves green. With it Thou reinvigorates the weak among Thy creatures and bringeth back to life the dead among Thy cities. O’ my Alláh! give rain from Thee with which our high lands get covered with green herbage, streams get flowing, our sides grow green, our fruits thrive, our cattle prosper, our far-flung areas get watered and our dry areas get its benefit, with Thy vast blessing and immeasurable grant on Thy distressed universe and Thy untamed beasts. And pour upon us rain which is drenching, continuous and heavy; wherein one cycle of rain clashes with the other and one rain drop pushes another (into a continuous chain), its lightning should not be deceptive, its cheek not rainless, its white clouds not scattered and rain not light, so that the famine-stricken thrive with its abundant herbage and the drought stricken come to life with its bliss. Certainly, Thou pourest down rain after the people lose hopes and spreadest Thy mercy, since Thou art the Guardian, the praiseworthy.

As-Sayyid ar-Radí says: The wonderful expressions of this sermon: Amír al-mu’minín’s words *“insáhat jibálúná”* means the mountains cracked on account of drought. It is said *“insáha’ththawbu”* when it is torn. It is also said *“insáha’n-nabtu”* or *“sáha”* or *“sawwaha”* when vegetation withers and dries up.

His words *“wa hámat dawábbuná”* means became thirsty, as *“huyám”* means thirst.

His words *“hadábiru’s-sinín”.* This is plural of *“hidbár”.* It means the camel whom treading has made thin. So Amír al-mu’minín likened with such a camel the year in which drought had occurred. The Arab poet Dhú ar-Rummah has said:

These thin camels remain in their places, facing hardships and move only when we take them to some dry area.

His words *“wa lá qaza`in rabábuhá”.* Here *“al-qaza”* means small pieces of cloud scattered all round.

His words *“wa lá shaffánin dhihábuhá”.* It stands for *“wa lá dháta shaffánin dhihábuhá”*. *“ash-shaffán”* means the cold wind and *“adh-dhiháb”* means light rain. He omitted the world *“dháta”* from here because of the listener’s knowledge of it.

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SERMON 115

About troubles which would arise and the Day of Judgement

Alláh deputised him (the Prophet) as a caller towards Truth and a witness over the creatures. The Prophet conveyed the messages of Alláh without being lazy and without any short-coming, and he fought His enemies in the cause of Alláh without being languid and without pleading excuses. He is the foremost of all who practise piety and the power of perception of all those who achieve guidance.

A part of the same sermon, complaining about his men

If you know what I know of the unknown that is kept wrapped up from you certainly you would have gone out into the open weeping over your deeds and beating yourselves in grief and you would have abandoned your properties without any guard for it or any substitute over it. Everyone would then have cared for his own self without paying attention to anyone else. But you have forgotten what was recalled to you and felt safe from what you had been warned. Consequently, your ideas went astray and your affairs were dispersed.

I do long that Alláh may cause separation between me and you and give me those who have a better right to be with me than you. By Alláh, they are people of blissful ideas, enduring wisdom and true speech. They keep aloof from revolt. They trod forward on the path (of Alláh) and ran on the high road. Consequently, they achieved the everlasting next life and easeful honours.

Beware! by Alláh, a tall lad of swinging gait from Banú Thaqíf would be placed over you. He would eat away your vegetation and melt your fat. So, O’ Abá Wadhahah, is that all?

as-Sayyid ar-Radí says: *“al-Wadhahah”* means *“al-khunfusá’* (dung-beetle).” In this sentence Amír al-mu’minín has referred to al-Hajjáj ibn Yúsuf ath-Thaqafí and he had an incident with *“al-Khunfusá ‘“,* which need not be related here.(1)

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(1). The detail of this incident is that one day al-Hajjáj stood up for saying prayers when al-khunfusá’ advanced towards him. al-Hajjáj held out his hand to stop him but he bit him whereby his hand got swollen and eventually he died of it.

Ibn Abi’l-hadíd has written that *“al-Wadhahah”* means the dung that remains sticking to the tail of an animal, and this surname is intended to disgrace him.

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SERMON 116

Rebuking Misers

You spend no wealth in the cause of Him Who gave it, nor do you risk your lives for the sake of Him Who created them. You enjoy honour through Alláh among His creatures, but you do not honour Alláh among His creatures. You should derive lessons from your occupying the places of those who were before you and from the departure of your nearest brothers.

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SERMON 117

In praise of his faithful companions

You are supporters of Truth and brethren in faith. You are the shield on the day of tribulation, and (my) trustees among the rest of the people. With your support I strike the runner away and hope for the obedience of him who advances forward. Therefore, extend to me support which is free from deceit and pure from doubt because, by Alláh, I am the most preferable of all for the people.

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SERMON 118

Amír al-mu'minín collected the people and exhorted them(1) to jihád but they observed long silence.
Then he said: "What is the matter with you. Have you become dumb?" A group of them replied: "O' Amír al-mu'minín if you go forth we shall be with you." Whereupon Amír al-mu'minín said:

What has happened to you? You may not be guided aright or shown the right path. Should in these circumstances I go forth? In fact, at this time one of the brave and the valorous among you whom I select should go out. It does not suit me to leave the army, the city, the public treasury, the land revenue, the dispensation of justice among Muslims and looking after the demands of the claimants and to follow one contingent after the other moving here and there like a featherless arrow moving in the quiver.

I am the axis of the mill. It rotates on me while I remain in my position. As soon as I leave it the centre of its rotation would be disturbed and its lower stone would also be disturbed. By Alláh, this is a very bad advice. By Alláh, if I had not been hoping for martyrdom by my meeting with the enemy - and my meeting with him has been ordained, I would have secured my carrier and went away from you and would not have sought you so long as North and South differed.

There is no benefit in the majority of your numbers because of lack of unity of your hearts. I have put you on the clear path whereon no one will perish except who perishes by himself. He who sticks to it would achieve Paradise and he who deviates goes to Hell.

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(1). When after the Battle of Siffín, Mu'áwiyah's forces began to attack various places in Amír al-mu'minín's area, he asked the Iraqis to check them but they declined on the plea that they would follow him if he himself came forward. Thereupon he delivered this sermon, and clarified his limitations, that if he himself went out it was impossible to run the affairs of the state, and that the enemy's attacks had already started on all sides. In these circumstances it was impolitic to keep the centre unguarded. But what could be hoped from those who changed the victory at Siffín into defeat and opened the door for these attacks.

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SERMON 119

About the greatness of Ahlu'l-bayt and the importance of the laws of Islam

By Alláh, I have knowledge of the conveyance of messages, fulfilment of promises and of entire expressions. We the people of the house (of the Prophet - Ahlu'l-bayt) possess the doors of wisdom and light of governance. Beware that the paths of religion are one and its highways are straight. He who follows them achieves (the aim) and secures (the objective). And he who stood away from it went astray and incurred repentance.

Do act for the day for which provisions are stored, and when the intentions would be tested. If a person's own intelligence which is present with him does not help him, the wits (of others) which are remote from him are more unhelpful and those which are away from him more useless. Dread the fire whose flame is severe, whose hollow is deep, whose dress is iron and whose drink is bloody pus. Beware! The(1) good name of a man retained by Alláh, the Sublime, among the people is better than wealth inherited by those who would not praise him.

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(1). If a person gives away something in his life time then the recipient feels obliged to him. But if wealth is extracted by force then the extractor does not feel himself under his obligation, nor does he praise it. The same is the case of one who dies. His successors think that whatever he had left behind was their right and they should have received it. In this there is no obligation of his to be acknowledged. But if he had done some good act with this very wealth his name would have remained behind him and people would have praised him also.

A Persian couplet says:

Happy is he who is remembered well after himself, for nothing save the name remains after the man is dead.

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SERMON 120

A man from among the companions of Amír al-mu'minín stood up and said, "O' Amír al-mu'minín, you first stopped us from Arbitration and thereafter gave order for it.

We do not know which of these two was more appropriate." Amír al-mu'minín struck one hand over the other and said:

This is the reward of one who breaks pledge. By Alláh, when I gave you my orders (namely) to abide by arbitration I had led you to an undesirable thing (namely war) in which Alláh had ordained good. If you had been steadfast I would have guided you, if you had been bent I would have straightened you and if you had refused I would have rectified you. This was the surest way. But with whom and to whom. I wanted my treatment from you but you proved to be my disease, like the extractor of thorn with the thorn when he knows that the thorn bends towards itself.

My Alláh, the physicians have despaired of this fatal ailment and water-drawers have become tired with the rope of this well. Where(1) are those who were invited to Islam and they accepted it? They read the Qur'án and decided according to it. They were exhorted to fight and they leapt (towards it) as she-camels leap towards their young. They took their swords out of the sheaths and went out into the world in groups and rows. Some of them perished and some survived. The good news of survival does not please them nor do they get condoled about the dead. Their eyes have turned white with weeping. Their bellies are emaciated because of fasting. Their lips are dry because of (constant) praying. Their colour is pale because of wakefulness. Their faces bear the dust of God-fearing. These are my comrades who have departed. We should be justified if we feel eager for them and bite our hands in their separation.

Certainly, Satan has made his ways easy for you and wants to unfasten the knots of religion one by one and to cause division among you in place of unity. Keep away from his evil ideas and enchantments and accept good advice of one who offers it to you and preserve it in your minds.

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(1). Although all those who fought under the banner of Amír al-mu'minín were called Shí`ahs of `Alí, yet only those who had tears in their eyes, paleness on their faces, the Qur'ánic verses on their tongues, zeal of religion in their hearts, steadfastness in their feet, determination and courage in their spirits, and patience and endurance in their minds could in true sense he called Shí`ahs of `Alí. These were the people in whose separation Amír al-mu'minín's feelings were coming out in the shape of sighs through the breath, while the flames of the fire of separation were consuming his heart and spirit. These were the people who leapt towards death like mad men and did not feel happy if they survived. Rather, their heart's slogan was as the Persian hemistich says:

We are ashamed why we have remained alive.

He who has even a slight brilliance of these qualities can alone be called the follower of the Descendants of the Prophet or the Shí`ah of `Alí, otherwise it would be a word which has lost its meaning and been bereft of its dignity through misuse. Thus tradition has it that Amír al-mu'minín saw a group of men at his door and enquired from Qanbar who they were and he answered they were his Shí`ahs. On hearing this Amír al-mu'minín had a frown on his forehead and said. "Why are they called Shí`ahs? They have no sign of Shí`ahs." Thereupon Qanbar enquired what were the signs of Shí`ahs and Amír al-mu'minín replied:

Their bellies are thin through hunger, their lips dry through thirst and their eyes bleared through weeping.

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SERMON 121

When the Khárijites persisted in their rejecting the Arbitration, Amír al-mu'minín went to their camp and addressed them thus:

Were all of you (1) with us in Siffín? They replied that some of them were but some of them were not. Amír al-mu'minín said:

Then you divide yourselves into two groups. One of those who were in Siffín and other of those who were not present there, so that I may address each as I see suitable. Then he shouted to the people:

Stop talking and keep quiet to listen to what I say. Turn your hearts to me. Whomever we ask for evidence, he should give it according to his knowledge about it.

Then he had a long conversation with them during which he said:

When they had raised the Qur'án by way of deceit, craft, artifice and cheat, did you not say "They are our brothers and our comrades in accepting Islam. They want us to cease fighting, and ask for protection through the Book of Alláh, the Glorified. Our opinion is to agree with them and to end their troubles." Then I said to you, "In this affair the outer side is Faith but the inner side is enmity. Its beginning is pity and the end is repentance. Consequently you should stick to your position, and remain steadfast on your path. You should press your teeth (to put all your might) in *jihád* and should not pay heed to the shouts of the shouter (2). If he is answered he would mislead, but if he is left (unanswered) he would be disgraced."

But when this thing (Arbitration) was done I found that you agreed to it. By Alláh, if I had refused it, it would not have been obligatory on me. Nor would Alláh have laid its sin on me. And by Alláh, not that I have accepted it, I alone am the rightful person who should be followed, for certainly the Qur'án is with me. I never forsake it since I adopted its company. We have been with the Prophet in battles wherein those killed were fathers, sons, brothers and relations of one another. Nevertheless, every trouble and hardship just increased us in our belief, in our treading on the right path, in submission to (divine) command and in endurance of the pain of wounds.

We now had to fight our brethren in Islam because of entry into Islam of misguidance, crookedness, doubts and (wrong) interpretation. However, if we find any way by which Alláh may collect us together in our disorder and by which we may come near each other in whatever common remains between us we would accept it and would give up everything else.

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(1). Ibn Abi'l-hadíd writes that this sermon comprises three parts which do not fit together, because as-Sayyid ar-Radí selected some parts of Amír al-mu'minín's sermons and did not record other parts as a result of which the continuity of utterance was not maintained. Thus, one part ends at "if he is left unanswered he would be disgraced", the other at "and endurance at the pain of wound" and the third runs till the end of the sermon.

(2). This reference is to Mu`áwiyah or `Amr ibn al-`ÁS.

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SERMON 122

Amír al-mu'minín's address to his followers on the battlefield of Siffín

About supporting the weak and the low-spirited during the fighting

Whoever among you feels spiritedness of heart during the action and finds any of his comrades feeling disheartened should ward off (the enemies) from him just as he would do from himself, because of the superiority he enjoys over the other, for if Alláh had willed He would have made the former also like him. Certainly death is a quick seeker. Neither does the steadfast escape it nor can the runner-away defy it. The best death is to be killed. By Alláh in Whose hand (power) lies the life of the son of Abú Tálib, certainly a thousand strikings of the sword on me are easier to me than a death in bed which is not in obedience to Alláh.

A part of the same sermon

It is as if I see you uttering voices like the rustling sound of lizards! You do not seek your own claims nor do you defend against oppression. You have been let free on the path. He who rushes (into the battle) achieves salvation, while he who lags behind, hesitating, gets destruction.

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SERMON 123

To exhort his followers to fight (1)

Put the armoured man forward and keep the unarmoured one behind. Grit your teeth because this will make the swords skip off the skull, and dodge on the sides of the spears for it changes the direction of their blades. Close the eyes because it strengthens the spirit and gives peace to the heart. Kill the voices because this will keep off spiritlessness .

Do not let your banner bend down, nor leave it alone. Do not give it to anyone except the brave and the defenders of honour among you because they alone endure the befalling of troubles; they surround the banners and encircle them on both sides, their rear and their front. They do not separate from them lest they give them over (to the enemy). They do not go ahead of them lest they leave them alone. Everyone should deal with his adversary and also help his comrade by his own life, and should not leave the adversary to his comrade lest both his own adversary and his comrade join against him.

By Alláh, even if you run away from the sword of today you would not remain safe from the sword of the next world. You are the foremost among the Arabs and great figures. Certainly in running away there is the wrath of Alláh, unceasing disgrace and lasting shame. And certainly a runner-away does not lengthen his life, nor does any thing come to intervene between him and his day (of death). Who is there to go towards Alláh like the thirsty going to the water? Paradise lies under the edges of spears. Today the reputations (about the valour of warriors) will be tested.

By Alláh! I am more eager to meet them (in combat) than they are for (returning to) their houses. O' my Alláh! If they reject truth disperse their group, divide their words (opinion) and destroy them on account of their sins.

They will not budge from their stand till the continuous striking of spears causes piercings (of wounds) through which wind may pass, and the hitting of swords cuts through the skull, cleaves bones and breaks forearms and legs, till they are attacked by contingent after contingent and assaulted by detachments which are followed by reserves for support, till their cities are continuously assailed by force after force, and till the horses trample even the extreme ends of the lands, the tracks of their beast and their meadows.

as-Sayyid ar-Radí says: *"ad-da`q"* means trampling, e.g., *"taduqqu'l-khuyúlu bihawafirihá ar_ahum"* (the horses trample the ground with their hoofs). *"nawáhini ar_ihim"* means lands opposite each other, it is said, *"manázilu baní fulánin tatanáharu"* meaning the 'houses of so-and-so are opposite each other.'

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(1). Amír al-mu'minín delivered this Sermon on the occasion of the battle of Siffín. This battle was fought in the year 37 A.H. between Amír al-mu'minín and the Governor of Syria (ash-Shám), Mu`áwiyah, for the so-called avenging for the killing of Caliph `Uthmán. But in reality it was nothing more than Mu`áwiyah who had been the Autonomous Governor of Syria from Caliph `Umar's days not wanting to lose that position by swearing allegiance to Amír al-mu'minín but wanting to keep his authority intact by exploiting the killing of Caliph `Uthmán, for later events proved that after securing the government he did not take any practical step to avenge `Uthmán's blood, and never spoke, not even through omission, about the killers of `Uthmán.

Although from the first day Amír al-mu'minín realised that war was inevitable, it was still necessary to exhaust all pleas. Therefore when on Monday the 12th Rajeb, 36 A.H. he returned to Kúfah after the battle of Jamal he sent Jarír ibn `Abdalláh al-Bajalí with a letter to Mu`áwiyah at Damascus wherein he wrote that the *muhájirún* and the *ansár* had sworn allegiance to him and that he too should first swear him allegiance and thereafter place the case of `Uthmán's killing before him so that he could pass verdict thereon according to the Qur'án and Sunnah. But Mu`áwiyah detained Jarír on several pretexts and after consulting `Amr ibn al-`ÁS staged a revolt on the excuse of `Uthmán's killing, and with the help of important persons of Syria convinced the ignorant people that the liability for `Uthmán's life lay on `Alí (p.b.u.h) and that he, with his conduct had encouraged the besiegers and had given them protection. Meanwhile he hung the blood-stained shirt of `Uthmán and the amputated fingers of his wife Ná'ilah bint al-Faráfisah on the pulpit in the Central Mosque of Damascus around which seventy thousand Syrians cried and swore the pledge to avenge `Uthmán's blood. When Mu`áwiyah had roused the feelings of the Syrians to such an extent that they were determined to lay down their lives and be killed, he secured their allegiance on the cause of avenging `Uthmán's blood and busied himself in equipping for the battle. Thereafter, he showed all this to Jarír and then sent him back mortified.

When Amír al-mu’minín learnt of these matters through Jarír ibn `Abdalláh al-Bajalí he was forced to rise against Mu`áwiyah, and ordered Málik ibn Habíb al-Yarbú`í to mobilise the forces in the valley of An-Nukhaylah. Consequently, people from the suburbs of Kúfah began arriving there in large numbers, till they exceeded eighty thousand. First of all, Amír al-mu’minín sent a vanguard contingent, eight thousand strong, under Ziyád ibn an-Nadr al-hárithí and another of four thousand strong under Shurayh ibn Hání al-hárithí towards Syria. After the departure of this vanguard contingent he himself set out for Syria at the head of the remaining army on Wednesday the 5th of Shawwál. When he was out of the boundary of Kúfah he offered ~uhr (noon) prayer and after staying at Dayr Abí Músá, Nahr (river) Nars, Qubbat Qubbín, Bábil, Dayr Ka`b, Karbalá’, Sábát, Bahurasíní, al-Anbár and al-Jazírah arrived at ar-Riqqah. The people of this place were in favour of `Uthmán, and at this very place Simák ibn Makhtamah al-Asadí was putting up with his eight hundred men. These people had left Kúfah to join Mu`áwiyah after deserting Amír al-mu’minín; when they had seen Amír al-mu’minín’s force they had dismantled the bridge over the River Euphrates so that Amír al-mu’minín’s army should not cross over to the other side of the River. But at the threatening of Málik ibn al-hárith al-Ashtar an-Nakha`í they were frightened, and after consultations among themselves they put the bridge together again and Amír al-mu’minín passed over it with his army. When he alighted on the other side of the River he saw that Ziyád and Shurayh were also putting up there along with their men since both of them had adopted the land route. When, on reaching here, they found that Mu`áwiyah was advancing with his armies towards the Euphrates and thinking that they would not be able to face him, they stopped there waiting for Amír al-mu’minín. When they had given the reason for their stopping there, Amír al-mu’minín accepted their plea and sent them forward. When they reached Súr ar-Rúm they found that Abú al-A`war as-Sulamí was camping there with his army. Both of them informed Amír al-mu’minín of this, whereupon he despatched Má1ik ibn al-hárith al-Ashtar an-Nakhá`í in their wake as the Officer in Command and cautioned him not to initiate the fighting but to try to counsel them and apprise them of the correct position as far as possible. In this way, on reaching there Málik al-Ashtar encamped a little distance away. Fighting could have commenced any moment, but he did not interfere with the other side nor did he take any step by which fighting could have been commenced. But Abú al-A`war suddenly attacked them at night, whereupon they took their swords out of the sheaths and prepared to repulse them. Clashes between the two sides went on for sometime but in the end, taking benefit of the darkness of night Abú al-A`war fled away. Since fighting had already commenced, soon after the appearance of dawn an Iraqi commander, Háshim ibn `Utbah al-Mirqál az-Zuhrí, took his position in the battlefield. From the other side also a contingent came to face him, and the flames of fighting rose high. At last Málik al-Ashtar challenged Abú al-A`war to fight him, but he did not dare to face him, and towards the evening Málik al-Ashtar went onwards with his men. The next day Amír al-mu’minín reached there with his force and set off for Siffín with the vanguard contingent and other forces. Mu`áwiyah had already reached there and had set up his bases. He had also placed a guard on the Euphrates and had occupied it. On reaching there Amír al-mu’minín sent him word to remove the guard from Euphrates, but he refused, whereupon the Iraqis took out their swords and in a courageous attack captured the Euphrates. When this stage was over Amír al-mu’minín sent Bashír ibn `Amr al-Ansárí, Sa`íd ibn Qays al-Hamdání and Shabath ibn Rib`í at-Tamímí to Mu`áwiyah to apprise him of the consequences of war and to make him agree to settlement and allegiance. But his reply was that they could not by any means let `Uthmán’s blood remain neglected, and that now the sword alone would arbitrate between them. Consequently in the month of Dhi’l-hijjah 36 A.H. both the parties decided on war and warriors from each side came out into the field to face their adversary. Those who entered the battlefield from Amír al-mu’minín’s side were: Hujr ibn `Adí al-Kindí, Shabath ibn Rib`í at-Tamímí, Khálid ibn al-Mu`ammar, Ziyád ibn an-Nadr al-hárithí, Ziyád ibn Khasafah at-Taymí, Sa`íd ibn Qays al-Hamdání, Qays ibn Sa`d al-Ansárí and Málik ibn al-hárith al-Ashtar an-Nakhá`í while from the Syrians there were, `Abd ar-Rahmán ibn Khálid ibn Walíd al-Makhzúní, Abú al-A`war as-Sulamí, habíb ibn Maslamah al-Fihrí, `Abdalláh ibn Dhi’l-Kala` al-himyarí, `Ubaydalláh ibn `Umar ibn al-Khattáb, Shurahbíl ibn Simt al-Kindí, and Hamzah ibn Málik al-Hamdání. When the month of Dhi’l-hijjah came to end the fighting had to be stopped for Muharram, but from the first of Safar fighting was resumed and both parties arrayed themselves opposite each other, equipped with swords, spears and other weapons. On Amír al-mu’minín’s side Málik al-Ashtar was in command of the horsemen and `Ammár ibn Yásir of the foot soldiers of Kúfah while Sahl ibn Hunayf al-Ansárí was in command of the horsemen and Qays ibn Sa`d of the foot soldiers of Basrah. The banner of the army was given to Háshim ibn `Utbah. In the army of the Syrians on the right hand contingent Ibn Dhi’l-Kalá` was in command, while on the left hand contingent Habíb ibn Maslamah, on horsemen `Amr ibn al-`ÁS and on foot soldiers ad-Dahhák ibn Qays al-Fihrí were in command.

On the first day Málik ibn al-Ashtar entered the battle-field with his men, and from the other side Habíb ibn Maslamah came out with his men to face him and from both sides a fierce battle ensued. Throughout the day swords clashed with swords and spears with spears.

Next day, Háshim ibn `Utbah came out with `Alí’s army and from the other side Abú al-A`war with his footmen came to face him. When the two armies approached near to each other, horsemen fell upon horsemen and footmen upon footmen and continued attacking each other. and they endured with great patience and steadfastness.

On the third day, `Ammár ibn Yásir and Ziyád ibn an-Nadr came out with horsemen and foot soldiers and from the other side `Amr ibn al-`ÁS came forward with a big force. Ziyád attacked the horsemen of the opposite side and Málik al-Ashtar attacked the foot soldiers so furiously that the enemy's men lost ground and, failing to offer resistance, returned to their camps.

On the fourth day Muhammad ibn al-hanafiyyah appeared on the battle-field with his men. From the other side `Ubaydalláh ibn `Umar came forward with the Syrian army and both the armies had a serious encounter.

On the fifth day `Abdallah ibn `Abbás came forward and from the other side al-Walíd ibn `Uqba ibn Abí Mu`ayt came to face him. `Abdallah ibn `Abbás carried the assaults with great steadfastness and courage and gave such a brave fight that the enemy left the field in retreat.

On the sixth day Qays ibn Sa`d al-Ansárí came forward with the army and to face him Ibn Dhi'l-Kalá` came out with his contingent, and such a severe fighting ensued that at every step bodies were seen falling and blood flowing like streams. At last the darkness of the night separated the two armies.

On the seventh day Málik al-Ashtar came out and to face him, Habíb ibn Maslamah came forward with his men, and fighting raged till ~uhr (noon).

On the eighth day Amír al-mu'minín himself came out with the army and made such an assault that the entire battlefield quaked, and piercing through the ranks and warding off shots of arrows and spears he came and stood between both the lines. Then he challenged Mu`áwiyah, whereupon the latter, along with `Amr ibn al-`ÁS, came a bit closer. Then Amír al-mu'minín said to him: "Come out and face me. Let whoever kills the other be the ruler." Whereupon `Amr ibn al-`ÁS said to Mu`áwiyah: "`Alí is right. Gather up a little courage and face him. Mu`áwiyah replied: "I am not prepared to waste my life ar your taunting." Saying this he went back. When Amír al-mu'minín saw him retreating he smiled and himself too returned. The daring with which Amír al-mu'minín led the attacks in Siffín can only be called a miraculous feat. Thus, whenever he came out challenging in the battlefield, the enemy lines were dispersed into utter disarray and confusion, and even courageous combatants hesitated to appear against him. That is why on a few occasions he came onto the battlefield in changed dress so that the enemy should not recognise him and someone should be prepared to engage with him personally. Once `Arár ibn Ad'ham came from the other side to engage with al-`Abbás ibn Rabí`ah al-hárith ibn `Abd al-Muttalib. They remained engaged but neither could defeat the other, until al-`Abbás chanced to see that a link of his adversary's armour was loose. With a swift stroke he entangled the point of his sword in it, and then with a quick jerk he cut through a few more links. Then with true aim he gave such a blow that his sword went straight into his bosom. Seeing this, people raised the call of *takbír*. Mu`áwiyah was startled at this noise and on coming to know that `Arár ibn Ad'ham had been slain he was much disturbed and shouted if there was anyone to take revenge for `Arár ibn Ad'ham and kill al-`Abbás, whereupon some tired swordsmen of the tribe of Lakhm came out challenging al-`Abbás. Al-`Abbás said he would come after taking his Chief's permission. Saying al-`Abbás came to Amír al-mu'minín to seek permission. Amír al-mu'minín detained him, put on al-`Abbás's dress. and riding on al-`Abbás's horse entered the battlefield. Taking him to be al-`Abbás, the Lakhms said: "So you have got your Chief's permission." In reply Amír al-mu'minín recited the following verse:

> *Permission (to fight) is given unto those upon whom war is made for they have been oppressed, and verily, to help them, Alláh is Most Potent.* (Qur'án, 22:39)

Now one man came out from the other side shouting like an elephant, ran amok and assaulted Amír al-mu'minín, but he avoided the blow and then gave such a clean cut with his sword to the other's back that he was split into two. People thought the blow had gone without avail, but when his horse jumped his two separate parts fell on the ground. After him another man came out but he too was finished in the twinkling of an eye. Then Amír al-mu'minín challenged others but from the strokes of his sword the enemy came to know that it was Amír al-mu'minín in the dress of al-`Abbás and so none dared come to face him.

On the ninth day the right wing was under the command of `Abdulláh ibn Budayl and the left wing under that of `Abdullah ibn al-`Abbás. In the centre was Amír al-mu'minín himself. On the other side Habíb ibn Maslamah commanded the Syrian army. When both the lines had come face to face with each other, the valiant soldiers drew out their swords and pounced upon one another like ferocious lions, and fighting raged on all sides. The banner of the right wing Amír al-mu'minín's army was revolving in the hands of Banú Hamdán. Whenever anyone of them fell, martyred, someone else would pick up the banner. First of all Kurayb ibn Shurayh raised the banner, on his fall Shurahbíl ibn Shurayh took it up, then Marthad ibn Shurayh, then Hubayrah ibn Shurayh then Yarím ibn Shurayh, then Sumayr ibn

Shurayh and after the killing of all these six brothers the banner was taken up by Sufyán, then `Abd, then Kurayb, the three sons of Zayd, who all fell martyred. After that the banner was lifted by two brothers (sons) of Bashír namely `Umayr and al-hárith and when they too fell martyred, Wahb ibn Kurayb took up the banner. On this day the enemy's greater attention was on the right wing and its assaults were so fierce that the men lost ground and began to retreat from the battlefield. Only three hundred men remained with the Officer in Command `Abdulláh ibn Budayl. On seeing this Amír al-mu'minín asked Málik al-Ashtar to call them back and challenge them as to where they were fleeing. "If the days of life are over they cannot avoid death by running away." Now the defeat of the right wing could not be without effect on the left wing, so Amír al-mu'minín turned to the left wing and advanced forward, forcing through the enemy lines, whereupon a slave of Banú Umayyah named Ahmar said to him, "Alláh may make me die if I fail to slay you today." On hearing this Amír al-mu'minín's slave Kaysán leapt over him but was killed by him. When Amír al-mu'minín saw this he caught him by the skirt of his armour and, picking him up, threw him down so forcefully that all his joints were smashed, whereupon Imám Hasan (p.b.u.h.) and Muhammad ibn al-hanafiyyah came forward and despatched him to Hell. Meanwhile, after having been called to Málik al-Ashtar and his having made them feel ashamed, the retreaters came back and again assaulted so steadfastly that pushing back the enemy they reached the place where `Abdulláh ibn Budayl was surrounded by the enemy. When he saw his own men he picked up courage and leapt towards Mu`áwiyah's tent with drawn sword. Málik al-Ashtar tried to stop him but he couldn't, and, killing seven Syrians, he reached the tent of Mu`áwiyah. When Mu`áwiyah noticed him close by he ordered him to be stoned, as a result of which he was overpowered and the Syrians crowded over him and killed him. When Málik al-Ashtar saw this he proceeded forward with the combatants of Banú Hamdán and Banú Madh'hij for an attack on Mu`áwiyah, and began dispersing the contingent on guard around him. When, out of the five circles of his guards only one remained to be dispersed, Mu`áwiyah put his foot in the stirrup of his horse in order to run away, but on someone's encouragement again stopped. On another side of the battlefield a tumult was raging from one end to the other by the swords of `Ammár ibn Yásir and Háshim ibn `Utbah. From whatever side `Ammár passed, the companions (of the Holy Prophet) flocked around him and then made such a joint assault that destruction spread throughout the enemy lines. When Mu`áwiyah saw them advancing he threw his fresh forces towards them. But he continued displaying the excellence of his bravery under the storm of swords and spears. At last Abú al-`Ádiyah al-Juhaní hit him with a spear from which he could not balance himself and then Ibn Hawiy (Jawn as-Saksikí) came forward and slew him. `Ammár ibn Yásir's death caused tumult in Mu`áwiyah's ranks because about him they had heard the Holy Prophet (PBUH) having said: " `Ammár will be killed at the hands of a rebellious party." Thus before he fell as martyr Dhu'l-Kalá` had said to `Amr ibn al-`ÁS: "I see `Ammár on `Alí's side; are we that rebellious party?" `Amr ibn al-`ÁS had assured him that eventually `Ammár would join them, but when he killed fighting on `Alí's side the rebellious party stood exposed and no scope was left for any other interpretation. Nevertheless Mu`áwiyah started telling the Syrians that: "We did not kill `Ammár, but `Alí did it because he brought him to the battlefield." When Amír al-mu'minín heard this cunning sentence he remarked: "In that case the Holy Prophet (PBUH) killed Hamzah as he had brought him to the battlefield of Uhud." Háshim ibn `Utbah also fell in this conflict. He was killed by al-hárith ibn Mundhir at-Tanúkhí. After him the banner of the contingent was taken over by his son `Abdulláh.

When such fearless warriors were gone Amír al-mu'minín said to the warriors from the tribes of Hamdán and Rabí`áh: "To me you are like armour and spear. Get up and teach these rebels a lesson. " Consequently, twelve thousand combatants of the tribes of Rabí`áh and Hamdán stood up, swords in hand. The banner was taken up by Hu_ayn ibn al-Mundhir. Entering the lines of the enemy, they used their swords in such a way that heads began to drop, bodies fell in huge heaps and on every side streams of blood flowed. And the assaults of these swordsmen knew no stopping till the day began to end with all its devastation and the gloom of eve set in, ushering in that fearful night which is known in history as the night of al-Harír, wherein the clashing of weapons, the hoofs of horses and the hue and cry of the Syrians created such notice that even voices reaching the ears could not be heard. On Amír al-mu'minín's side, his wrong-crushing slogans raised waves of courage and valour, and on the enemy's side they shook the hearts in their bosoms. The battle was at its zenith. The quivers of the bowmen had become empty. The stalks of the spears had been broken. Hand to hand fighting went on with swords only and dead bodies collected in heaps, till by morning the number of killed had exceeded thirty thousand.

On the tenth day Amír al-mu'minín's men showed the same morale. On the right wing Málik al-Ashtar held the command and on the left wing `Abdulláh ibn al-`Abbás. Assaults went on like the assaults of new soldiers. Signs of defeat appeared on the Syrians, and they were about to leave the battlefield and run away, when five hundred Qur'áns were raised on spears changing the entire face of the battle. Moving swords stopped, the weapon of deceit was successful, and the way was clear for wrong to hold its sway.

In this battle forty-five thousand Syrians were killed while twenty-five thousand Iraqis fell as martyrs. *(Kitáb Siffín* by Nasr ibn Muzáhim al-Minqarí [d. 212 A.H.] and *at-Táríkh at-Tabarí*, vol. 1, pp. 3256-3349).

SERMON 124

About the Kharijites and their opinion on Arbitration

We did not name people the arbitrators but we named the Qur’án the arbitrator. The Qur’án is a book, covered, between two flaps, and it does not speak. It should therefore necessarily have an interpreter. Men alone can be such interpreters. When these people invited us to name the Qur’án as the arbitrator between us, we could not be the party turning away from the Book of Alláh. since Alláh has said:

. . . And then if ye quarrel about anything refer it to Alláh and the Prophet . . (Qur’án, 4:59)

Reference to Alláh means that we decide according to the Qur’án while reference to the Prophet means that we follow his Sunnah. Now therefore, if arbitration were truly done through the Book of Alláh (Qur’án). we would be the most rightful of all people for the Caliphate; or if it were done by the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet (PBUH), we would be the most preferable of them.

Concerning your point why I allowed a time lag between myself and them with regard to the Arbitration, I did so in order that the ignorant may find out (the truth) and one who already knows may hold with it firmly. Possibly Alláh may, as a result of this peace, improve the condition of these people, and they will not be caught by the throats and will not, before indication of the right, fall into rebellion as before. Certainly the best man before Alláh is he who loves most to act according to right, even though it causes him hardship and grief rather than according to wrong, even though it gives him benefit and increase.

So, where are you being misled and from where have you been brought (to this state)? Be prepared to march to the people who have deviated from the right and do not see it, have been entangled in wrong-doing and are not corrected. They are away from the Book and turned from the (right) path. You are not trustworthy to rely upon, nor are you holders of honour to be adhered to. You are very bad in kindling the fire of fighting. Woe to you! I had to bear a lot of worries from you. Some day I call you (to jihad) and some day I speak to you in confidence, you are neither true free men at the time of call, nor trustworthy brothers at the time of speaking in confidence.

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SERMON 125

When Amir al-mu'minin was spoken ill of for showing equality in the distribution (of shares from Bayt al-mál or the Muslim Public Treasury) he said:

Do you command me that I should seek support by oppressing those over whom I have been placed? By Alláh, I won't do so as long as the world goes on, and as long as one star leads another in the sky. Even if it were my property, I would have distributed it equally among them, then why not when the property is that of Alláh. Beware; certainly that giving of wealth without any right for it is wastefulness and lavishness. It raises its doer in this world, but lowers him in the next world. It honours him before people, but disgraces him with Alláh. If a man gives his property to those who have no right for it or do not deserve it, Alláh deprives him of their gratefulness, and their love too would be for others. Then if he falls on bad days and needs their help, they would prove the worst comrades and ignoble friends.

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SERMON 126

About the Khárijites

If you do not stop believing that I have gone wrong and been misled, why do you consider that the common men among the followers of the Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.a.h.p.) have gone astray like me, and accuse them with my wrong, and hold them unbelievers on account of my sins. You are holding your swords on your shoulders and using them right and wrong. You are confusing those who have committed sins with those who have not. You know that the Prophet (PBUH) stoned the protected (married) adulterer, then he also said his burial prayer and allowed his successors to inherit from him. He killed the murderer and allowed his successors to inherit from him. He amputated (the hand of) the thief and whipped the unprotected (unmarried) adulterer, but thereafter allowed their shares from the booty, and they married Muslim women. Thus the Prophet (PBUH) took them to ask for their sins and also abided by Alláh's commands about them, but did not disallow them their rights created by Islam, nor did he remove their names from its followers.

Certainly you are the most evil of all persons and are those whom Satan has put on his lines and thrown out into his wayless land. With regard to me, two categories of people will be ruined, namely he who loves me too much and the love takes him away from rightfulness, and he who hates me too much and the hatred takes him away from rightfulness. The best man with regard to me is he who is on the middle course. So be with him and be with the great majority (of Muslims) because Alláh's hand (of protection) is on keeping unity. You should beware of division because the one isolated from the group is (a prey) to Satan just as the one isolated from the flock of sheep is (a prey) to the wolf.

Beware; whoever calls to this course, kill him, even though he may be under this headband of mine. Certainly the two arbitrators were appointed to revive what the Qur'án revives and to destroy what the Qur'án destroys. Revival means to unite on it (in a matter) and destruction means to divide on a matter. If the Qur'án drives us to them we should follow them, and if it drives them to us they should follow up. May you have no father! (Woe to you), I did not cause you any misfortune, nor have I deceived you in any matter, nor created any confusion. Your own group had unanimously suggested in favour of these two men and we bound them that they would not exceed the Qur'án but they deviated from it and abandoned the right although both of them were conversant with it. This wrong-doing was the dictate of their hearts and so they trod upon it, although we had stipulated that in arbitrating with justice and sticking to rightfulness they would avoid the evil of their own views and the mischief of their own verdict (but since this has happened the award is not acceptable to us).

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SERMON 127

About Important happenings in Basrah

O' Ahnaf! It is as though I see him advancing with an army which has neither dust nor noise, nor rustling of reins, nor neighing of horses. They are trampling the ground with their feet as if they are the feet of ostriches.

as-Sayyid ar-Radí says: Amír al-mu'minín pointed to the Chief of the Negroes, (*Sáhibu'z-Zanj*) .(1) Then Amír al -mu'minín said:

Woe to you (the people of Basrah's) inhabited streets and decorated houses which possess wings like the wings of vultures and trunks like the trunks of elephants; they are the people from among whom if one is killed he is not mourned and if one is lost he is not searched for. I turn this world over on its face, value it only according to its (low) value, and look at it with an eye suitable to it.

A part of the same sermon

Referring to the Turks (Mongols)

I (2) can see a people whose faces are like shields covered with rough-scraped skins. They dress themselves in silken and woollen clothes and hold dear excellent horses. Their killing and bloodshed shall take place freely till the wounded shall walk over the dead and the number of runners-away shall be less than those taken prisoner:

One of his companions said to him: O' Amír al-mu'minín, you have been given knowledge of hidden things. **Whereupon Amír al-mu'minín laughed and said to the man who belonged to the tribe of Banú Kalb:**

O' brother of Kalb! This is not knowledge of hidden things (*`ilmu'l-ghayb*), (3) these matters have been acquired from him (namely in Prophet) who knew them. As regard knowledge of hidden things, that means knowledge of the Day of Judgement, and the things covered by Alláh in the verse.

Verily, Alláh is He with Whom is the knowledge of the Hour... (Qur'án, 31:34)

Therefore, Alláh alone knows what is there in the wombs, whether male or female, ugly or handsome, generous or miserly, mischievous or pious, and who will be the fuel for Hell and who will be in the company of the Prophets in Paradise. This is the knowledge of the hidden things which is not known to anyone save Alláh. All else is that whose knowledge Alláh passed on to His Prophet and he passed it on to me, and prayed for me that my bosom may retain it and my ribs may hold it.

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(1). `Alí ibn Muhammad was born in the village of Warzanín in the suburbs of Ray and belonged to the Azáriqah sect of the Khárijites. He claimed to be a *sayyid* (descendant of the Holy Prophet) by showing himself the son of Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Mukhtafí ibn `Ísá ibn Zayd ibn `Alí ibn al-husayn ibn `Alí ibn Abí Tálib, but the experts on lineality and biographers have not accepted his claim to being a *sayyid* and have given his father's name as Muhammad ibn `Abd ar-Rahím instead of Muhammad ibn Ahmad. The former was from the tribe of `Abd al-Qays and had been born of a Sindí maid-slave.

`Alí ibn Muhammad rose as an insurgent in 255 A.H. in the reign of al-Muhtadí Billáh and associated with him the people from the suburbs of Basrah on promise of money, wealth and freedom. He entered Basrah on the 17th *Shuwwál*, 255 A.H. killing and looting, and in only two days he put to death thirty thousand individuals, men, women and children, and displayed extreme oppression, bloodshed, savageness and ferocity. He dismantled houses, burnt mosques, and after continuous killing and devastation for fourteen years, was killed in the month of *Safar*, 270 A.H. in the reign of Muwaffaq Billáh. Then people got rid of his devastating deeds.

Amír al-mu'minín's prophecy is one of those prophecies which throw light on his knowledge of the unknown. The details of his army given by Amír al-mu'minín namely that there would be neither neighing of horses nor rustling of weapons therein is a historical fact. The historian at-Tabarí has written that when this man reached near al-Karkh (a sector of Baghdád) with the intention of insurrection, the people of that place welcomed him, and a man presented him

a horse for which no rein could be found despite a search. At last he rode it using a rope for the rein. Similarly there were at that time only three swords in his force - one with himself, one with `Alí ibn Abán al-Muhallabí, and one with Muhammad ibn Salm, but later they collected some more weapons by marauding.

(2). This prophecy of Amír al-mu'minín is about the attack of the Tartars (Mongols) who were inhabitants of the Mongolian desert in the north west of Turkistan. These semi-savage tribes lived by marauding, killing and devastating. They used to fight among themselves and attack neighbouring areas. Each tribe had a separate chief who was deemed responsible for their protection. Chingiz Khán (Temujin) who was one of the ruling chiefs of these tribes and was very brave and courageous had risen to organise all their divided tribes into one, and, despite their opposition he succeeded in overpowering them through his might and sagacity. Collecting a large number under his banner he rose in 606 A.H. like a torrent and went on dominating cities and ruining populations till he conquered the area upto North China.

When his authority was established he offered his terms of settlement to `Aláu'd-Dín Khwárazm Sháh, ruler of the neighbouring country of Turkistan, and through a deputation concluded an agreement with him that the Tartar traders would be allowed to visit his country for trade and their life and property would not be subject to any harm. For some time they traded freely without fear but on one occasion `Aláu'd-Dín accused them of spying, seized their goods and had them killed by the Chief of Atrár. When Chingiz Khán learnt of the breach of the agreement and the killing of Tartar merchants his eyes cast forth flames and he began trembling with rage. He sent word to `Aláu'd-Dín to return the goods of the Tartar merchants and to hand over to him the ruler of Atrár. `Aláu'd-Dín, who was mad with power and authority, did not pay any heed, and acting short-sightedly killed even the plenipotentiary of Chingiz Khán. Now Chingiz Khán lost all patience and his eyes filled with blood. He rose with his sword in hand, and the Tartar warriors leapt towards Bukhárá on their speedy stallions. `Aláu'd-Dín came out with four hundred thousand combatants to face him but could not resist the incessant assaults of the Tartars, and having been vanquished only after a few attacks ran away to Níshábúr across the river Jaxartes (Síhún). The Tartars smashed Bukhárá and razed it to the ground. They pulled down schools and mosques, burning to ashes the houses and killing men and women without distinction. Next year they assaulted Samarqand and devastated it completely. After the flight of `Aláu'd-Dín, his son Jalálu'd-Dín Khwárazm Sháh had assumed the reins of government The Tartars chased him also, and for ten years he fled from one place to the other but did not fall in their hands. At last he crossed over the river out of the boundaries of his realm. During this time the Tartars did their utmost to ruin populated lands and to annihilate humanity. No city escaped their ruining and no populace could avoid their trampling. Wherever they went they upset the kingdom, overthrew governments, and in a short time established their authority over the northern portion of Asia.

When Chingiz Khán died in 622 A.H. his own son Ogedei Khán succeeded him. He searched out Jalálu'd-Dín in 628 A.H. and killed him. After him Mongka Khán, the son of the other son of Chingiz Khán, occupied the throne. After Mongka Khán, Qubilai Khán succeeded to a part of the country and the control of Asia fell to the share of his brother Húlágú Khán. On the division of the whole realm among the grandsons of Chingiz Khán, Húlágú Khán was thinking of conquering Muslims areas when the hanafite of Khurásán in enmity with the Sháfi`ite invited him to attack Khurásán. He therefore led an assault on Khurásán, and the hanafite, thinking themselves to be safe from the Tartars, opened the city gates for them. But the Tartars did not make any distinction between hanafite and Sháfi`ite and killed whoever fell to their hands. After killing most of its population they took it in occupation. These very differences between the hanafite and the Sháfi`ite opened for him the door of conquest upto Iraq. Consequently, after conquering Khurásán his courage increased and in 656 A.H. he marched on Baghdád with two hundred thousand Tartars. al-Musta`sim Billáh's army and the people of Baghdád jointly faced them, but it was not in their power to stop this torrent of calamity. The result was that the Tartars entered Baghdád on the day of `Ashúrá' carrying with them bloodshed and ruin. They remained busy in killing for forty days. Rivers of blood flowed in the streets and all the alleys were filled with dead bodies. Hundred of thousands of people were put to the sword while al-Musta`sim Billáh was trampled to death under foot. Only those people who hid themselves in wells or underground places and hid from their sight could survive. This was the devastation of Baghdád which shook the `Abbásid Kingdom to its foundation, so that its flag could never fly thereafter.

Some historians have laid the blame of this ruin on Ibn al-`Alqamí (Abú Tálib, Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Baghdádi), the minister of al-Musta`sim Billáh, by holding that, moved by the general masses of the Shí`ahs and the ruin of al-Karkh sector (of Baghdád), he invited Húlágú Khán through the latter's minister, the great scholar Nasíru'd-Dín Muhammad ibn Muhammad at-Túsí, to march on Baghdád. Even if it be so, it is not possible to ignore the historical fact that before this the `Abbásid Caliph an-Násir Lidíni'lláh had initiated the move for the attack on the Muslim areas. When the Khwárazm Sháhs declined to acknowledge the authority of the Caliphate he had sent word to Chingiz Khán to march on Khwárazm, from which the Tartars had understood that there was no unity and co-operation among the Muslims. Thereafter the hanafite had sent for Húlágú Khán to crush the Sháfi`ite as a consequence of which the Tartars secured control over Khurásán, and prepared the way to march towards Baghdád. In these circumstances to hold only

Ibn al-`Alqamí responsible for the ruination of Baghdád and to ignore the move of an-Násir Lidíni'lláh and the dispute between the hanafite and the Sháfi`ite would be covering up the facts, when in fact the cause for the ruin of Baghdád was this very conquest of Khurásán, whose real movers were the hanafite inhabitants of the place. It was by this conquest that Húlágú Khán had the courage to march on the centre of Islam; otherwise it cannot have been the result of a single individual's message that he assaulted an old capital like Baghdád, the awe of whose power and grandeur was seated in the hearts of a large part of the world.

(3). To know hidden things on a personal level is one thing, while to be gifted by Alláh with knowledge of any matter and to convey it to others is different. The knowledge of the future which the prophets and vicegerents possess is gained by them through Alláh's teaching and informing. Alláh alone has knowledge of events which are to happen in the future. Of course, He passes this knowledge on to whoever He wills. Thus He says:

> (He alone is) *the "Knower of the unseen, neither doth He reveal His secrets unto any* (one else) *save unto that one of the Messengers whom He chooseth..."* (Qur'án, 72:26-27)

In this way Amír al-mu'minín also received knowledge of the future through the instructions of the Prophet or inspiration from Alláh, for which these words of Amír al-mu'minín stand evidence. Of course, sometimes it is not proper or expedient to disclose certain matters and they are allowed to remain under a veil. Then no one can be acquainted with them as Alláh says:

> *Verily, Alláh is He with Whom is the knowledge of the Hour and He sendeth down the rain, and knoweth He what is in the wombs; and knoweth not any soul what he shall earn the morrow, and knoweth not any soul in what lands he shall die: Verily Alláh is All-knowing, All-aware.* (Qur'án, 31:34)

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SERMON 128

About measures and weights, the transience of this world and the condition of its people

O' creatures of Alláh! You and whatever you desire from this world are like guests with fixed period of stay, and like debtors called upon to pay. Life is getting short while (the records of) actions are being preserved. Many strivers are wasting (their efforts) and many of those who exert are heading towards harm. You are in a period when steps of virtue are moving backwards, steps of evil are moving forward and Satan is increasing his eagerness to ruin people. This is the time that his equipment is strong, his traps have been spread and his prey has become easy (to catch).

Cast your glance over people wherever you like, you will see either a poor man suffering from poverty, or a rich man ignoring Alláh despite His bounty over him, or a miser increasing his wealth by trampling on Alláh's obligations, or an unruly person closing his ears to all counsel. Where are your good people; where are your virtuous people? Where are your high spirited men and generous men? Where are those of you who avoid deceit in their business and remain pure in their behaviour? Have they not all departed from this ignoble, transitory and troublesome world? Have you not been left among people who are just like rubbish and so low that lips avoid mention of them and do not move even to condemn their low position.

... "Verily we are Alláh's and verily unto Him shall we return." (Qur'án, 2:156)

Mischief has appeared and there is no one to oppose and change it, nor anyone to dissuade from it or desist from it. Do you, with these qualities, hope to secure abode in the purified neighbourhood of Alláh and to be regarded His staunch lovers? Alas! Alláh cannot be deceived about His paradise and His will cannot be secured save by His obedience. Alláh may curse those who advise good but they themselves avoid it, and those who desist others from evil but they themselves act upon it.

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SERMON 129

Delivered when Abú Dharr (1) was exiled towards ar-Rabadhah

O' Abú Dharr! You showed anger in the name of Alláh therefore have hope in Him for whom you became angry. The people were afraid of you in the matter of their (pleasure of this) world while you feared them for your faith. Then leave to them that for which they are afraid of you and get away from them taking away what you fear them about. How needy are they for what you dissuade them from and how heedless are you towards what they are denying you. You will shortly know who is the gainer tomorrow (on the Day of Judgement) and who is more enviable. Even if these skies and earth were closed to some individual and he feared Alláh, then Alláh would open them for him. Only rightfulness should attract you while wrongfulness should detract you. If you had accepted their worldly attractions they would have loved you and if you had shared in it they would have given you asylum.

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(1). Abú Dharr al-Ghifárí's name was Jundab ibn Junádah. He was an inhabitant of ar-Rabadhah which was a small village on the east side of Medina. When he heard about the proclamation of the Prophet, he came to Mecca and after making enquires saw the Prophet and accepted Islam whereupon the unbelievers of Quraysh gave him all sorts of troubles and inflicted pain after pain, but he remained steadfast. Among the acceptors of Islam he is the third, fourth or fifth. Along with this precedence in Islam his renunciation and piety was so high that the Prophet said:

> Among my people Abú Dharr is the like of `Ísá (Jesus) son of Maryam (Mary) in renunciation and piety.

In the reign of Caliph `Umar, Abú Dharr left for Syria and during `Uthmán's reign also remained there. He spent his days in counselling, preaching, acquainting people with the greatness of the members of the Prophet's family and guiding the people to the rightful path. The traces of Shí`ism now found in Syria and Jabal `Ámil (north of Lebanon) are the result of his preaching and activity and the fruit of seeds sown by him. The Governor of Syria, Mu`áwiyah, did not like the conduct of Abú Dharr and was much disgusted with his open criticism and mention of the money-making and other wrongful activities of `Uthmán. But he could do nothing. At last he wrote to `Uthmán that if he remained there any longer he would rouse the people against the Caliph. There should therefore be some remedy against this. On this, `Uthmán wrote to him that Abú Dharr should be seated on an unsaddled camel and dispatched to Medina. The order was obeyed and Abú Dharr was sent to Medina. On reaching Medina he resumed his preaching of righteousness and truth. He would recall to the people the days of the Holy Prophet and refrain them from displays of kingly pageantry, whereupon `Uthmán was much perturbed and tried to restrict his speaking. One day he sent for him and said: "I have come to know that you go about propagating that the Holy Prophet said that:

> "When Banú Umayyah will become thirty in number they will regard the cities of Alláh as their property, His creatures their slaves and His religion the tool of their treachery."

Abú Dharr replied that he had heard the Prophet say so. `Uthmán said that he was speaking a lie and enquired from those beside him if any one had heard this tradition and all replied in the negative. Abú Dharr then said that enquiry should be made from Amír al-mu'minín `Alí ibn Abí Tálib (p.b.u.h.). He was sent for and asked about it. He said it was correct and Abú Dharr was telling the truth. `Uthmán enquired on what basis he gave evidence for the correctness of this tradition. Amír al-mu'minín replied that he had heard the Holy Prophet say that:

> There is no speaker under the sky or over the earth more truthful than Abú Dharr.

Now `Uthmán could do nothing. If he still held him to be liar it would mean falsification of the Prophet. He therefore kept quiet despite much perturbation, since he could not refute him. On the other side Abú Dharr began speaking against the usurping of Muslims' property quite openly and whenever he saw `Uthmán he would recite this verse:

> *And those who hoard up gold and silver and spend it not in Alláh's way; announce thou unto them a painful chastisement. On the Day* (of Judgement) *when it shall be heated in the fire of hell, then shall be branded with it their foreheads and their sides and their backs;* (saying unto them) *"This is what ye hoarded up for yourselves, taste ye then what ye did hoard up. "* (Qur'án, 9:34-35)

`Uthmán promised him money but could not entrap this free man in his golden net, then resorted to repression but could not stop his truth-speaking tongue. At last he ordered him to leave and go to ar-Rabadhah and deputised Marwán, son of the man (al-Hakam) exiled by the Prophet, to turn him out of Medina. At the same time he issued the inhuman order that no one should speak to him nor see him off. But Amír al-mu'minín, Imám Hasan, Imám Husayn, `Aqíl ibn Abí Tálib, `Abdulláh ibn Ja`far and `Ammár ibn Yásir did not pay any heed to this order and accompanied him to see him off, and Amír al-mu'minín uttered these sentences (i.e., the above sermon) on that occasion.

In ar-Rabadhah, Abú Dharr had to put up with a very had life. It was here that his son Dharr and his wife died and the sheep and goats that he was keeping for his livelihood also died. Of his children only one daughter remained, who equally shared his starvation and troubles. When the means of subsistence were fully exhausted and day after day passed without food she said to Abú Dharr: "Father, how long shall we go on like this. We should go somewhere in search of livelihood." Abú Dharr took her with him and set off for the wilderness. He could not find even any foliage. At last he was tired and sat down at a certain place. Then he collected some sand and, putting his head on it, lay down. Soon he began gasping, his eyes rolled up and pangs of death gripped him .

When the daughter saw this condition she was perplexed and said, "Father, if you die in this vast wilderness, how shall I manage for your burial quite alone." He replied, "Do not get upset. The Prophet told me that I shall die in helplessness and some Iraqis would arrange for my burial. After my death you put a sheet over me and then sit by the roadway and when some caravan passes that way tell them that the Prophet's companion Abú Dharr has died." Consequently, after his death she went and sat by the roadside. After some time a caravan passed that way. It included Málik ibn al-hárith al-Ashtar an-Nakha`í, Hujr ibn `Adí at-Tá'í, `Alqamah ibn Qays an- Nakha`í, Sa`sa`ah ibn Súhán al-`Abdí, al-Aswad ibn Yazíd an-Nakha`í etc. who were all fourteen persons in number. When they heard about the passing away of Abú Dharr they were shocked at his helpless death. They stopped their riding beasts and postponed the onward journey for his burial. Má1ik al-Ashtar gave a sheet of cloth for his shroud. It was valued at four thousand Dirhams. After his funeral rites and burial they departed. This
happened in the month of *Dhi'l-hijjah*, 32 A.H.

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SERMON 130

Grounds for accepting the Caliphate and the qualities of a ruler and governor

O' (people of) differing minds and divided hearts, whose bodies are present but wits are absent. I am leading you (amicably) towards truthfulness, but you run away from it like goats and sheep running away from the howling of a lion. How hard it is for me to uncover for you the secrets of justice, or to straighten the curve of truthfulness.

O' my Alláh! Thou knowest that what we did was not to seek power nor to acquire anything from the vanities of the world. We rather wanted to restore the signs of Thy religion and to usher prosperity into Thy cities so that the oppressed among Thy creatures might be safe and Thy forsaken commands might be established. O' my Alláh! I am the first who leaned (towards Thee) and who heard and responded (to the call of Islam). No one preceded me in prayer (*salát*) except the Prophet.

You certainly know that he who is in charge of honour, life, booty, (enforcement of) legal commandments and the leadership of the Muslims should not be a miser as his greed would aim at their wealth, nor be ignorant as he would then mislead them with his ignorance, nor be of rude behaviour who would estrange them with his rudeness, nor should he deal unjustly with wealth thus preferring one group over another, nor should he accept a bribe while taking decisions, as he would forfeit (others) rights and hold them up without finality, nor should he ignore *sunnah* as he would ruin the people.

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SERMON 131

Warning about death and counselling

We praise Him for whatever He takes or gives or whatever He inflicts on us or tries us with. He is aware of all that is hidden and He sees all that is concealed. He knows all that breasts contain or eyes hide. We render evidence that there is no god except He and that Muhammad - peace be upon him and his progeny - has been chosen by Him and deputised by Him -evidence tendered both secretly and openly, by heart and by tongue.

A part of the same sermon

By Alláh, certainly it is reality not fun, truth not falsehood. It is none else than death. Its caller is making himself heard and its dragsman is making haste. The majority of the people should not deceive you. You have seen those who lived before you, amassed wealth, feared poverty and felt safe from its (evil) consequences, the longevity of desires and the (apparent) distance from death. How, then, death overtook them, turned them out of their homelands and took them out of their places of safety. They were borne on coffins, people were busy about them one after another, carrying them on their shoulders and supporting them with their hands.

Did you not witness those who engaged in long-reaching desires, built strong buildings, amassed much wealth but their houses turned to graves and their collections turned into ruin. Their property devolved on the successors and their spouses on those who came after them. They cannot (now) add to their good acts nor invoke (Alláh's) mercy in respect of evil acts. Therefore, whoever makes his heart habituated to fear Alláh achieves a forward position and his action is successful. Prepare yourself for it and do all that you can for Paradise. Certainly this world has not been made a place of permanent stay for you. But it has been created as a pathway in order that you may take from it the provisions of your (good) actions for the permanent house (in Paradise). Be ready for departure from here and keep close your riding animals for setting off.

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SERMON 132

On the Glory of Alláh

This world and the next have submitted to Him their reins, and the skies and earths have flung their keys towards Him. The thriving trees bow to Him in the morning and evening, and produce for Him flaming fire from their branches, and at His command, turn their own feed into ripe fruits.

A part of the same sermon about the Holy Qur'án

The Book of Alláh is among you. It speaks and its tongue does not falter. It is a house whose pillars do not fall down, and a power whose supporters are never routed.

A part of the same sermon about the Holy Prophet

Alláh deputised the Prophet after a gap from the previous prophets when there was much talk (among the people). With him Alláh exhausted the series of prophets and ended the revelation. He then fought for Him those who were turning away from Him and were equating others with Him.

A part of the same sermon about this world

Certainly this world is the end of the sight of the (mentally) blind who see nothing beyond it. The sight of a looker (who looks with the eye of his mind) pierces through and realises that the (real) house is beyond this world. The looker therefore wants to get out of it while the blind wants to get into it. The looker collects provision from it (for the next world) while the blind collects provision for this very world.

A part of the same sermon - A caution

You should know that a man gets satiated and wearied with everything except life, because he does not find for himself any pleasure in death. It is in the position of life for a dead heart, sight for the blind eye, hearing for the deaf ear, quenching for the thirsty and it contains complete sufficiency and safety.

The Book of Alláh is that through which you see, you speak and you hear. Its one part speaks for the other part, and one part testifies to the other. It does not create differences about Alláh nor does it mislead its own follower from (the path of) Alláh. You are joined together in hatred of each other and in the growing of herbage on your filth (i.e., for covering inner dirt by good appearance outside). You are sincere with one another in your love of desires and bear enmity against each other in earning wealth. The evil spirit (Satan) has perplexed you and deceit has misled you. I seek the help of Alláh for myself and you.

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SERMON 133

Delivered when Caliph `Umar ibn al-Khattáb consulted (1) Amír al-mu'minín about himself, taking part in the march towards Rome (Byzantine Empire).

Alláh has taken upon Himself for the followers of this religion the strengthening of boundaries and hiding of the secret places. Alláh helped them when they were few and could not protect themselves. He is living and will not die. If you will your self proceed towards the enemy and clash with them and fall into some trouble, there will be no place of refuge for the Muslims other than their remote cities, nor any place they would return to. Therefore, you should send there an experienced man and send with him people of good performance who are well-intentioned. If Alláh grants you victory, then this is what you want. If it is otherwise, you would serve as a support for the people and a returning place for the Muslims.

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(1). About Amír al-mu'minín, the strange position is adopted that on the one hand, it is said that he was ignorant of practical politics and unacquainted with ways of administration from which it is intended that the revolts created by the Umayyad's lust for power should be shown to be the outcome of Amír al-mu'minín's weak administration. On the other hand, much is made of the various occasions when the then Caliphs consulted Amír al-mu'minín in important affairs of State in the matter of wars with unbelievers. The aim in this is not to exhibit his correctness of thinking and judgement or deep sagacity but to show that there was unity and concord between him and the Caliphs so that attention should not be paid to the fact that in some matters they also differed and that mutual clashes had also occurred . History shows that Amír al-mu'minín did have differences of principles with the Caliphs and did not approve every step of theirs. In the sermon of *ash-Shiqshiqiyyah* he has expressed in loud words his difference of opinion and anger about each regime. Nevertheless, this difference does not mean that correct guidance should be withheld in collective Islamic problems. Again, Amír al-mu'minín's character was so high that no one could imagine that he would ever evade giving counsel which concerned the common weal, or would give such counsel which would damage public interests. That is why, despite differences of principle, he was consulted. This throws light on the greatness of his character and the correctness of his thinking and judgement. Similarly, it is a prominent trait of the Holy Prophet's character that despite rejecting his claim to prophethood the unbelievers acknowledged him the best trustee and could never doubt his trustworthiness. Rather, even during clashes of mutual opposition they entrusted to him their property without fear and never suspected that their property would be misappropriated. Similarly, Amír al-mu'minín was held to occupy so high a position of trust and confidence that friend and foe both trusted in the correctness of his counsel. So, just as the Prophet's conduct shows his height of trustworthiness, and just as it cannot be inferred from it that there was mutual accord between him and the unbelievers, because trust has its own place while the clash of Islam and unbelief has another, in the same way, despite having differences with the Caliphs, Amír al-mu'minín was regarded as the protector of national and community interests and as the guardian of Islam's well-being and prosperity. Thus when national interests were involved he was consulted and he tendered his unbiased advice raising himself above personal ends and keeping in view the Prophet's tradition to the effect that "He who is consulted is a trustee" never allowed any dishonesty or duplicity to interfere. When on the occasion of the battle of Palestine, the Caliph `Umar consulted him about his taking part in it himself, then, irrespective of whether or not his opinion would accord with `Umar's feelings, he kept in view Islam's prestige and existence and counselled him to stay in his place and to send to the battle-front such a man who should be experienced and well-versed in the art of fighting, because the going of an inexperienced man would have damaged the established prestige of Islam and the awe in which the Muslims were held which had existed from the Prophet's days would have vanished. In fact, in the Caliph `Umar's going there Amír al-mu'minín saw signs of defeat and vanquishment. He therefore found Islam's interest to lie in detaining him and indicated his view in the words that:

> "If you have to retreat from the battle-field, it would not be your personal defeat only, but the Muslims would lose heart by it and leave the battle-field and disperse here and there, because with the officer in command leaving the field the army too would lose ground. Furthermore, with the centre being without the Caliph there would be no hope of any further assistance from behind which could sustain courage of the combatants."

This is that counsel which is put forth as a proof of mutual accord although this advice was tendered in view of Islam's prestige and life which was dearer to Amír al-mu'minín than any other interest. No particular individual's life was dear to him for which he might have advised against participation in the battle.

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SERMON 134

There was some exchange of words between `Uthmán ibn `Affán and Amír al-mu'minín

when al-Mughírah ibn al-Akhnas (1) said to `Uthmán that he would deal with Amír al-mu'minín on his behalf whereupon Amír al-mu'minín said to al-Mughírah:

O' son of the accursed and issueless, and of a tree which has neither root nor branch. Will you deal with me? By Alláh, Alláh will not grant victory to him whom you support, nor will he be able to stand up whom you raise. Get away from us. Alláh may keep you away from your purpose. Then do whatever you like. Alláh may not have mercy on you if you have pity on me.

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(1). al-Mughírah ibn al-Akhnas ath-Thaqafí was among the well-wishers of `Uthmán ibn `Affán and the son of his paternal aunt. His brother Abu'l Hakam ibn al-Akhnas was killed at the hands of Amír al-mu'minín in the battle of Uhud, because of which he bore malice against Amír al-mu'minín. His father was one of those people who accepted Islam at the time of the fall of Mecca but retained heresy and hypocrisy in heart. That is why Amír al-mu'minín called him accursed, and he called him issueless because he who has a son like al-Mughírah deserves to be called issueless.

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SERMON 135

About the sincerity of his own intention and support of the oppressed

Your allegiance to me was not without thinking,(1) nor is my and your position the same. I seek you for Alláh's sake but you seek me for your own benefits. O' people! support me despite your heart's desires. By Alláh, I will take revenge for the oppressed from the oppressor and will put a string in the nose of the oppressor and drag him to the spring of truthfulness even though he may grudge it.

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(1). Here Amír al-mu'minín points to the view of `Umar ibn al-Khattáb which he had on the allegiance of Abú Bakr on the day of Saqífah when he said: " . . . let me clarify this to you that the allegiance with Abú Bakr was a mistake and without thinking (*faltah*) but Alláh saved us from its evil. Therefore, whoever (intends to) acts like this you must kill him. . ." (*as-Sahíh*, al-Bukhárí, vol. 8, p. 211; *as-Sírah an-Nabawiyyah*, Ibn Hishám, vol. 4, pp. 308-309; *at-Táríkh*, at-Tabarí, vol. l, p. l822; *al-Kámil*, Ibn al-Athír, vol. 2, p. 327; *at-Táríkh*, Ibn Kathír, vol. 5, pp. 245-246; *al-Musnad*, Ahmad ibn Hanbal, vol. l, p. 55; *as-Sírah al-halabiyyah*, vol. 3, pp. 388, 392; *al-Ansáb*, al-Baládhurí, vol. 5, p. l5; *at-Tamhíd*, al-Baqilání, p. l96; *ash-Sharh*, Ibn Abi'l-hadíd, vol. 2, p. 23)

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SERMON 136

About Talhah and az-Zubayr

By Alláh, they did not find any disagreeable thing in me, nor did they do justice between me and themselves. Surely, they are now demanding a right which they have abandoned and blood which they have themselves shed. If I partook in it with them then they too have a share in it, but if they committed it without me the demand should be against them. The first step of their justice should be that they pass verdict against themselves. I have my intelligence with me.

I have never mixed matters nor have they appeared mixed to me. Certainly, this is the rebellious group in which there is the near one (az-Zubayr), the scorpion's venom (`Á'ishah) and doubts which cast a veil (on facts). But the matter is clear, and the wrong has been shaken from its foundation. Its tongue has stopped uttering mischief. By Alláh, I will prepare for them a cistern from which I alone will draw water. They will not be able to drink from it nor would they be able to drink from any other place.

A part of the same sermon

You advanced towards me shouting "allegiance, allegiance" like she-camels having delivered newly born young ones leaping towards their young. I held back my hand but you pulled it towards you., I drew back my hand but you dragged it. O' my Alláh! these two have ignored my rights and did injustice to me. They both have broken allegiance to me, and roused people against me. Unfasten Thou what they have fastened, and do not make strong what they have woven. Show them the evil in what they aimed at and acted upon. Before fighting I asked them to be steadfast in allegiance and behaved with them with consideration but they belittled the blessing and refused (to adopt the course of) safety.

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SERMON 137

Referring to events in the future

He will direct desires towards (the path of) guidance while people will have turned guidance towards desires, and he will turn their views to the direction of the Qur'án while the people will have turned the Qur'án to their views.

A part of the same sermon

(Before this Enjoiner of Good (1), matters will deteriorate) till war will rage among you with full force, showing forth its teeth, with udders full of sweet milk but with a sour tip. Beware, it will be tomorrow and the morrow will come soon with things which you do not know. The Man in power, not from this crowd, will take to task all those were formerly appointed for their ill deeds and the earth will pour forth its eternal treasures and fling before him easily her keys. He will show you the just way of behaviour and revive the Qur'án and *sunnah* which have become lifeless (among people).

A part of the same sermon

As if I see (him), he (the Enjoiner of Evil) (2) is shouting in Syria (ash-Shám) and is extending his banners to the outskirts of Kúfah. He is bent towards it like the biting of the she-camel. He has covered the ground with heads. His mouth is wide open and (the trampling of) his footsteps on the ground have become heavy. His advance is broad and his attacks are severe.

By Alláh, he will disperse you throughout the earth till only a few of you remain, like kohl in the eye. You will continue like this till the Arabs return to their sense. You should therefore stick to established ways, clear signs and the early period which has the lasting virtues of the Prophethood. You should know that Satan makes his ways easy so that you may follow him on his heels.

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(1). This prophecy of Amír al-mu'minín is with regard to the appearance of the Twelfth Imám, Abu'l-Qásim Muhammad ibn al-hasan al-Mahdí (p.b.u.h.).

(2). This refers to `Abd al-Malik ibn Marwán who came to power in Syria (ash-Shám) after his father Marwán ibn al-Hakam and then after the killing of al-Mukhtár ibn Abí `Ubayd ath-Thaqafí in his encounter with Mus`ab ibn az-Zubayr he proceeded towards Iraq. He clashed with Mus`ab's force at Maskin near Dayru'l-játhalíq in the outskirts of Kúfah. After defeating him he made a victorious entry into Kúfah and took allegiance from its inhabitants. Then he sent al-Hajjáj ibn Yúsuf ath-Thaqafí to Mecca to fight with `Abdulláh ibn az-Zubayr. Consequently this man besieged Mecca and stoned it, and shed the blood of thousands of innocent persons like water. He killed Ibn az-Zubayr and hung his body on the gallows. He perpetrated such atrocities on the people that one shudders at the thought of them.

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SERMON 138

On the occasion of the Consultative Committee (after the death of `Umar ibn al-Khattáb)

No one preceded me in inviting people to truthfulness, in giving consideration to kinship and practising generosity. So, hear my word and preserve what I say. Maybe you will see soon after today that over this matter swords will be drawn and pledges will be broken, so much so that some of you will become leaders of the people of misguidance and followers of people of ignorance.

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SERMON 139

About backbiting and speaking ill of others (1)

Those who do not commit sins and have been gifted with safety (from sins) should take pity on sinners and other disobedient people. Gratefulness should be mostly their indulgence and it should prevent them from (finding faults with) others. What about the backbiter who blames his brother and finds fault with him? Does he not remember that Alláh has concealed the sins which he committed while they were bigger than his brother's sins pointed out by him? How can he vilify him about his sins when he has himself committed one like it? Even if he has not committed a similar sin he must have committed bigger ones. By Alláh, even if he did not commit big sins but committed only small sins, his exposing the sins of people is itself a big sin.

O' creature of Alláh, do not be quick in exposition anyone's sin for he may be forgiven for it, and do not feel yourself safe even for a small sin because you may be punished for it. Therefore, every one of you who comes to know the faults of others should not expose them in view of what he knows about his own faults, and he should remain busy in thanks that he has been saved from what others have been indulging in.

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(1). The habit of fault finding and backbiting has become so common that even the feeling of its evilness has disappeared. And at present neither the high avoid it nor the low; neither the high position of the pulpit prevents it nor the sacredness of the mosque. Whenever a few companions sit together their topic of conversation and engaging interest is just to discuss the faults of their opponents with added colourisation, and to listen to them attentively. Although the fault finder is himself involved in the faults which he picks up in others, yet he does not like that his own faults should be exposed. In such a case, he should have consideration for similar feelings in others and should avoid searching for their faults and hurting their feelings. He should act after the proverb: "Do not do unto others what you do not want others to do unto you."

Backbiting is defined as the exposure of the fault of a brother-in-faith with the intent to vilify him in such a way as to irritate him, whether it be by speaking, acting, implication or suggestion. Some people take backbiting to cover only that which is false or contrary to fact. According to them to relate what was seen or heard, exactly as it was, is not backbiting, and they say that they are not backbiting but only relating exactly what they saw or heard. But in fact backbiting is the name of this very relating of the facts, because if it is not factually correct it would be false accusation and wrong blame. It is related about the Prophet that he said:

> "Do you know what backbiting is?" People said, "Alláh and His Prophet know better." Then he said, "Backbiting means that you say about your brother a thing which pains him." Someone said, "But what if I say what is actually true about him?" The Prophet replied, "It is backbiting only when it is factually true, otherwise you would be accusing him falsely."

There are many causes for indulging in backbiting, and because of this a man commits it sometimes knowingly and sometimes unknowingly. Abú Hámid al-Ghazálí has recounted these causes in detail in his book *Ihyá' `ulúmu'd-dín*. A few of the important ones are:

1) To make fun of anyone or to make him appear abased.
2) To make people laugh and to display one's own jolliness and high spiritedness.
3) Expressing one's feelings under the influence of rage and anger.
4) To establish one's feelings under the influence of rage and anger.
5) To disprove one's connection or involvement in a matter; namely that a particular evil was not committed by oneself but by someone else.
6) To associate oneself with some group when in their company in order to avoid strangeness with them.
7) To belittle a person from whom it is feared that he will expose some fault of one's.
8) To defeat a competitor in the same calling.
9) To seek position in the audience of someone in power.
10) To express sorrow by saying it is sad that so-and-so has fallen in such and such a sin.
11) To express astonishment, for example, to say it is wonderful that so and so has done this.
12) To name the committer of an act when expressing anger over it.

However, in some cases fault finding or criticising does not fall under backbiting.

1) If the oppressed complains of the oppressor in order to seek redress, it is not backbiting. Alláh says about it: *Loveth not Alláh open utterance of evil in speech except by one who hath been wronged..* (Qur'án, 4:148)
2) To relate anyone's fault while giving advice is not backbiting because dishonesty and duplicity is not permissible in counselling.
3) If in connection with seeking the requirements of a religious commandment the naming of a particular individual cannot be avoided, then to state the fault of such person to the extent necessary would not be backbiting.
4) To relate the misappropriation or dishonesty committed by someone with a view to saving a Muslim brother from harm would not be backbiting.
5) To relate the fault of someone before one who can prevent him from committing it is not backbiting.
6) Criticism and expression of opinion about a relater of traditions is not backbiting.
7) If a person is well acquainted with someone's shortcoming, then to relate such a fault in order to define his personality, for example, describing a deaf, dumb, lame or handless person as thus, is not backbiting.
8) To describe any fault of a patient before a physician for purposes of treatment is not backbiting.
9) If someone claims wrong lineage then to expose his correct lineage is not backbiting.
10) If the life, property or honour of someone can be protected only by informing him of some fault, it would not be backbiting.
11) If two persons discuss a fault of another which is already known to both it would not be backbiting, although to avoid iscussing it is better, since it is possible one of the two might have forgotten it.
12) To expose the evils of one who openly commits evils is not back-biting as the tradition runs: "There is no backbiting in the case of he who has torn away the veil of shamefulness."

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SERMON 140

Against reliance on heresy

O' people! If a person knows his brother to be steadfast in faith and of correct ways he should not lend ear to what people may say about him. Sometimes the bowman shoots arrows but the arrow goes astray; similarly talk can be off the point. Its wrong perishes, while Alláh is the Hearer and the Witness. There is nothing between truth and falsehood except four fingers.

Amír al-mu'minín was asked the meaning of this whereupon he closed his fingers together and put them between his ear and eye and said: It is falsehood when you say, "I have heard so," while it is truth when you say, "I have seen."

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SERMON 141

Against misplaced generosity

He who shows generosity to those who have no claim to it or who are not fit for it would not earn anything except the praise of the ignoble and appreciation of bad persons, although as long as he continues giving, the ignorant will say how generous his hand is, even though in the affairs of Alláh he is a miser.

Therefore, to whosoever Alláh gives wealth he should use it in extending good behaviour to his kinsmen, in entertaining, in releasing prisoners and the afflicted; in giving to the poor and to debtors, and he should endure (the troubles arising out of) the fulfilment of rights (of others) and hardships in expectation of reward. Certainly, the achievement of these qualities is the height of greatness in this world and achievement of the distinctions of the next world; if Alláh so wills.

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SERMON 142

Praying for rain

Beware; the earth which bears you and the sky which overshadows you are obedient to their Sustainer (Alláh). They have not been bestowing their blessings on you for any feeling of pity on you or inclination towards you, nor for any good which they expect from you, but they were commanded to bestow benefits on you and they are obeying, and were asked to maintain your good and so they are maintaining it.

Certainly, Alláh tries his creatures in respect of their evil deeds by decreasing fruits, holding back blessings and closing the treasures of good, so that he who wishes to repent may repent, he who wishes to turn away (from evils) may turn away, he who wishes to recall (forgotten good) may recall, and he who wishes to abstain (from evil) may abstain. Alláh, the Glorified, has made the seeking of (His) forgiveness a means for the pouring down of livelihood and mercy on the people as Alláh has said:

> *... Seek ye the forgiveness of your Lord! Verily, He is the Most-forgiving, He will send (down) upon you the cloud raining in torrents, and help you with wealth and sons (children) . . .* (Qur'án, 17:10-12)

Alláh may shower mercy on him who took up repentance, gave up sins and hastened (in performing good acts before) his death.

O' my Alláh! we have come out to Thee from under the curtains and coverings (of houses) when the beasts and children are crying, seeking Thy Mercy, hoping for the generosity of Thy bounty and fearing Thy chastisement and retribution. O' my Alláh! give us to drink from Thy rain and do not disappoint us, nor kill us by years (of drought) nor punish us for what the foolish among us have committed, O' the Most Merciful of all.

O' my Alláh! we have come out to Thee to complain to Thee who is (already) not hidden from Thee, when the seven troubles have forced us, droughty famines have driven us, distressing wants have made us helpless and troublesome mischiefs have incessantly befallen us. O' my Alláh! we beseech Thee not to send us back disappointed nor to return us with down-cast eyes, nor to address us (harshly) for our sins, nor deal with us according to our deeds.

O' my Alláh! do pour on us Thy mercy, Thy blessing, Thy sustenance and Thy pity, and make us enjoy a drink which benefits us, quenches our thirst, produces green herbage with which all that was lost gets a growing and all that had withered comes to life again. It should bring about the benefit of freshness and plentifulness of ripe fruits. With it plains may be watered, rivers may begin flowing, plants may pick up foliage and prices may come down. Surely, Thou art powerful over whatever Thou willest.

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SERMON 143

Deputation of Prophets

Alláh deputed prophets and distinguished them with His revelation. He made them as pleas for Him among His creation, so that there should not remain any excuse for people. He invited people to the right path through a truthful tongue. You should know that Alláh fully knows creation. Not that He was not aware of what they concealed from among their hidden secrets and inner feelings, but in order to try them as to whom from among them performs good acts, so that there is reward in respect of good acts and chastisement in respect of evil acts.

The position of Ahlu'l-bayt (the Household of the Holy Prophet)

Where are those who falsely and unjustly claimed that they are deeply versed in knowledge, as against us, although Alláh raised us in position and kept them down, bestowed upon us knowledge but deprived them, and entered us (in the fortress of knowledge) but kept them out. With us guidance is to be sought and blindness (of misguidance) is to be changed into brightness. Surely Imáms (divine leaders) will be from the Quraysh. They have been planted in this line through Háshim. It would not suit others nor would others be suitable as heads of affairs.

A part of the same sermon about those who are against the Ahlu'l-bayt

They have adopted this world and abandoned the next world; left clean water and drunk stinking water. I can almost see their wicked one (1) who committed unlawful acts, associated himself with them, befriended them and accorded with them till his hair grew grey and his nature acquired their tinge. He proceeded onward emitting foam like a torrential stream not caring whom he drowned, or, like fire in straw, without realising what he burnt.

Where are the minds which seek light from the lamps of guidance, and the eyes which look at minarets of piety? Where are the hearts dedicated to Alláh, and devoted to the obedience of Alláh? They are all crowding towards worldly vanities and quarrelling over unlawful issues. The ensigns of Paradise and Hell have been raised for them but they have turned their faces away from Paradise and proceeded to Hell by dint of their performances. Alláh called them but they showed dislike and ran away. When Satan called them they responded and proceeded (towards him).

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(1). Here the reference is to `Abd al-Malik ibn Marwán who committed extreme atrocities through his officer al-Hajjáj ibn Yúsuf ath-Thaqafí.

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SERMON 144

About this world

O' people, you are, in this world, the target for the arrows of death. With every drinking there is choking and with every eating there is suffocation. You do not get any benefit in it except by foregoing another (benefit) and no one among you advances in age by a day except by the taking away of a day from his life. Nothing more is added to his eating unless it reduces what was there before. No mark appears for him unless a mark disappears. Nothing new comes into being unless the new becomes old. No new crop comes up unless a crop has been reaped. Those roots are gone whose off-shoots we are. How can an off-shoot live after the departure of its root?

A part of the same sermon on innovation (bid`ah)

No innovation is introduced unless one *sunnah* is forsaken, keep away from innovations and stick to the broad road. Surely the old tested ways are the best and the innovated ones are bad.

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SERMON 145

Spoken when Umar ibn al-Khattab consulted Amír al-mu'minín about taking part in the battle of Persia. (1)

In this matter, victory of defeat is not dependent on the smallness or greatness of forces. It is Alláh's religion which He has raised above all faiths, and His army which He has mobilised and extended, till it has reached the point where it stands now, and has arrived its present positions. We hold a promise from Alláh, and He will fulfil His promise and support His army.

The position of the head of government is that of the thread for beads, as it connects them and keeps them together. If the thread is broken, they will disperse and be lost, and will never come together again. The Arabs today, even though small in number are big because of Islam and strong because of unity. You should remain like the axis for them, and rotate the mill (of government) with (the help of) the Arabs, and be their root. Avoid battle, because if you leave this place the Arabs will attack you from all sides and directions till the unguarded places left behind by you will become more important than those before you.

If the Persians see you tomorrow they will say, "He is the root (chief) of Arabia. If we do away with him we will be in peace." In this way this will heighten their eagerness against you and their keenness to aim at you. You say that they have set out to fight against the Muslims. Well, Alláh detests their setting out more than you do, and He is more capable of preventing what He detests. As regards your idea about their (large) number, in the past we did not fight on the strength of large numbers but we fought on the basis of Alláh's support and assistance.

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(1). When some people advised Caliph `Umar to partake in the battle of al-Qádisiyyah or Naháwand, he finding it against his personal inclination, thought it necessary to consult Amír al-mu'minín, so that if he advised against it he would plead before others that he had stayed back on Amír al-mu'minín's advice, but also if he advised partaking in the battle some other excuse would be found. However, unlike others, Amír al-mu'minín advised him to stay back. The other people had advised him to join in fighting, because the Holy Prophet did not send only others to fight but took part in it himself as well, keeping his close relations also with him. What Amír al-mu'minín had in view was that `Umar's presence in the battle could not be beneficial to Islam, but rather his staying back would save the Muslims from dispersion.

Amír al-mu'minín's view that "the position of the head of government is that of the axis around which the system of the government rotates" is a point of principle and does not concern any particular personality. Whether the ruler is a Muslim or an unbeliever, just or despotic, virtuous or vicious, for the administration of the state his presence is a necessity, as Amír al-mu'minín has explained elsewhere at greater length:

> The fact is that there is no escape for men from a ruler good or bad. Faithful persons perform (good) acts in his rule while the unfaithful enjoys (worldly) benefits in it. During the rule, Alláh will carry everything to its end. Through the ruler tax is collected, the enemy is fought, roads are protected and the right of the weak is taken from the strong till the virtuous enjoy peace and are allowed protection from (the oppression of) the wicked. (*Sermon 40*)

The words which Amír al-mu'minín uttered in his advice are not indicative of any quality of Caliph `Umar except his being the ruler. There is no doubt that he held worldly authority, irrespective of the question of whether it was secured in the right way or wrong way. And where there is authority there is centring of people's affairs. That is why Amír al-mu'minín said that if `Umar would go out the Arabs would follow him in large numbers towards the battlefield, because when the ruler is on the march the people will not like to stay behind. The result of their going would be that city after city would become vacant, while the enemy will infer from their reaching the battlefield that the Islamic cities are lying vacant, and that if these people were repulsed no assistance would reach the Muslims from the centre. Again, if the ruler were killed the army would disperse automatically, because the ruler is as its foundation. When the foundation is shaken the walls cannot remain standing. The word *"ahlu'l-`Arab"* (the root chief) of Arabia has not been used by Amír al-mu'minín as his own but he has taken it from the Persians. Obviously in his capacity as the head of the State, Caliph `Umar was, in their view, the chief of Arabia. Besides, the reference is to the country, not to Islam or Muslims, so that there is no suggestion of any importance for him from the Islamic point of view.

When Amír al-mu’minín pointed out to Caliph `Umar that on his reaching there the Persians would aim at him, and that if he fell into their hands they would not spare him without killing, although such words would have touched the brave to the quick and would have heightened their spirits, `Umar liked the advice to stay back and thought it better to keep himself away from the flames of battle. If this advice had not been in accord with his personal inclination he would not have received it so heartily and would have tried to argue that the administration of the country could be maintained by leaving a deputy. Again when other people had already advised him to go out, what was the need for consulting Amír al-mu’minín except to get an excuse to stay back.

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SERMON 146

The purpose of the deputation of the Holy Prophet and the condition of the time when people would go against the Qur’án

Alláh deputed Muhammad (p.b.u.h.a.h.p.) with Truth so that he may take out His people from the worship of idols towards His worship and from obeying Satan towards obeying Him and sent him with the Qur’án which He explained and made strong, in order that the people may know their sustainer (Alláh) since they were ignorant of Him, may acknowledge Him since they were denying Him, and accept Him since they were refusing (to believe in) Him. Because He, the Glorified, revealed Himself to them through His Book without their having seen Him, by means of what He showed them out of His might and made them fear His sway. How He destroyed those whom He wished to destroy through His chastisement and ruined those whom He wished to ruin through His retribution!

On the future

Certainly, a time will come upon you after me when nothing will be more concealed than rightfulness, nothing more apparent than wrongfulness and nothing more current than untruth against Alláh and His Prophet. For the people of this period nothing will be more valueless than the Qur’án being recited as it ought to be recited, nor anything more valuable than the Qur’án being misplaced from its position. And in the towns nothing will be more hated than virtue, nor anything more acceptable than vice.

The holders of the book will throw it away and its memorisers would forget it. In these days the Qur’án and its people will be exiled and expelled. They will be companions keeping together on one path, but no one will offer them asylum. Consequently at this time the Qur’án and its people will be among the people but not among them, will be with them but not with them, because misguidance cannot accord with guidance even though they may be together. The people will have united on division and will therefore have cut away from the community, as though they were the leaders of the Qur’án and not the Qur’án their leader. Nothing of it will be left with them except its name, and they will know nothing save its writing and its words. Before that, they will inflict hardships on the virtuous, naming the latter’s truthful views about Alláh false allegations, and enforcing for virtues the punishment of the vice.

Those before you passed away because of the lengthening of their desires and the forgetting of their death, till that promised event befell them about which excuses are turned down, repentance is denied and punishment and retribution is inflicted.

About Ahlu’l-bayt

O’ people, he who seeks counsel from Alláh secures guidance and he who adopts His word as guide is led towards what is more straight, because Alláh’s lover feels secure and His opponent feels afraid. It does not behove one who knows His greatness to assume greatness, but the greatness of those who know His greatness is that they should know before Him, and the safety for those who know what His power is lies in submitting to Him. Do not be scared away from the truth like the scaring of the healthy from the scabbed person, or the sound person from the sick.

You should know that you will never know guidance unless you know who has abandoned it, you will never abide by the pledges of the Qur’án unless you know who has broken them, and will never cling to it unless you know who has forsaken it. Seek these things from those who own them because they are the life spring of knowledge and death of ignorance. They are the people whose commands will disclose to you their (extent of) knowledge, their silence will disclose their (capacity of) speaking and their outer appearance will disclose their inner self. They do not go against religion, and do not differ from one other about it, while it is among them a truthful witness and a silent speaker.

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SERMON 147

About Talhah and az-Zubayr and the people of Basrah

Both of these two (Talhah and az-Zubayr) wishes the Caliphate for himself, and is drawing towards himself as against the other fellow. They do not employ any connection for getting access to Alláh nor proceed towards Him through any means. Both of them bear malice against the other. Shortly his veil over it will be uncovered. By Alláh, if they achieve what they aim at, one of them will kill the other, and one will finish the other. The rebellious party has stood up. Where are the seekers of virtue; for the paths have already been determined and they have been given the news. For every misguidance there is a cause and for every break of pledge there is a misrepresentation. By Alláh, I shall not be like him who listens to the voice of mourning, hears the man who brings news of death and also visits the mourner yet does not take lesson.

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SERMON 148

Before his passing away (last will)

O' people. Every one has to meet what he wishes to avoid by running away. (1) Death is the place to which life is driving. To run away from it means to catch it. How many days did I spend in searching for the secret of this matter, but Alláh did not allow save its concealment. Alas! It is a treasured knowledge. As for my last will, it is that concerning Alláh, do not believe in a partner for Him, and concerning Muhammad (p.b.u.h.a.h.p.), do not disregard his *Sunnah*. Keep these two pillars and burn these two lamps. Till you are not divided, no evil will come to you. (2) Every one of you has to bear his own burden. It has been kept light for the ignorant. Alláh is Merciful. Faith is straight. The leader (Prophet) is the holder of knowledge. Yesterday I was with you; today I have become the object of a lesson for you, and tomorrow I shall leave you. Alláh may forgive me and you.

If the foot remains firm in this slippery place, well and good. But if the foot slips, this is because we are under the shade of branches, the passing of the winds and the canopy of the clouds whose layers are dispersed in the sky, and whose traces disappeared (3) in the earth. I was your neighbour. My body kept you company for some days and shortly you will find just an empty body of mine which would be stationary after (all its) movement and silent after speech so that my calmness, the closing of my eyes, and the stillness of my limbs may provide you counsel, because it is more of a counsel for those who take a lesson (from it) than eloquent speech and a ready word. I am departing from you like one who is eager to meet (someone). Tomorrow you will look at my days, then my inner side will be disclosed to you and you will understand me after the vacation of my place and its occupation by someone else.

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(1). This means that during all the time spent in the attempts that a man makes to avoid death and in the means he adopts for it, it is only the span of life that is shortened. As the time passes the objective of death approaches near, so much so that in one's attempt to seek life one meets death.

(2). *"wa khalákum dhammun"* (No evil will come to you). This sentence is used as a proverb. It was first employed by Qasír, slave of Jadhímah ibn Málik al-Abrash.

(3). The intention is that when all these things die, how can those who inhabit them remain safe? Certainly they too, like every thing else, have to pass away some day or other. Then why should there be any wonder at my life coming to an end?

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SERMON 149

About future events and some activities of the hypocrites

They took to the right and the left piercing through to the ways of evil and leaving the paths of guidance. Do not make haste for a matter which is to happen and is awaited, and do not wish for delay in what the morrow is to bring for you. For, how many people make haste for a matter, but when they get it they begin to wish they had not got it. How near is today to the dawning of tomorrow. O' my people, this is the time for the occurrence of every promised event and the approach of things which you do not know. Whoever from among us will be during these days will move through them with a burning lamp and will tread on the footsteps of the virtuous, in order to unfasten knots, to free slaves, to divide the united and to unite the divided. He will be in concealment from people. The stalker will not find his footprints even though he pursues with his eye. Then a group of people will be sharpened like the sharpening of swords by the blacksmith. Their sight will be brightened by revelation, the (delicacies of) commentary will be put in their ears and they will be given drinks of wisdom, morning and evening.

A part of the same sermon

Their period became long in order that they might complete (their position of) disgrace and deserve vicissitudes, till the end of the period was reached, and a group of people turned towards mischief and picked up their arms for fighting. The virtuous did not show any obligation to Alláh but calmly endured, and did not feel elated for having engaged themselves in truthfulness. Eventually the period of trial came to an end according to what was ordained. Then they propagated their good views among others and sought nearness to Alláh according to the command of their leader.

When Alláh took the Prophet (to himself) a group of men went back on their tracks. The ways (of misguidance) ruined them and they placed trust in deceitful intriguers, showed consideration to other than kinsmen, abandoned the kin whom they had been ordered to love, and shifted the building from its strong foundation and built it in other than its (proper) place. They are the source of every shortcoming and the door of gropers in the dark. They were moving to and fro in amazement and lay intoxicated in the way of the people of the Pharaohs. They were either bent on this world and taking support on it or away from the faith and removed from it.

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SERMON 150

The condition of the people during disorder, and advice against oppression and unlawful earning

I praise Alláh and seek His help from (what led to the) punishment of Satan and his deceitful acts, and (I seek His) protection from Satan’s traps and waylayings. I stand witness that there is no god but Alláh and I stand witness that Muhammad is His slave and His Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) and his chosen and his selected one. Muhammad’s (p.b.u.h.a.h.p.) distinction cannot be paralleled nor can his loss be made good. Populated places were brightened through him when previously there was dark misguidance, overpowering ignorance and rude habits, and people regarded unlawful as lawful, humiliated the man of wisdom, passed lives when there were no prophets and died as unbelievers.

You, O’ people of Arabia, will be victims of calamities which have come near. You should avoid the intoxication of wealth, fear the disasters of chastisement, keep steadfast in the darkness and crookedness of mischief when its hidden nature discloses itself, its secrets become manifest and its axis and the pivot of its rotation gain strength. It begins in imperceptible stages but develops into great hideousness. Its youth is like the youth of an adolescent and its marks are like the marks of beating by stone.

Oppressors inherit it by (mutual) agreement. The first of them serves as a leader for the latter one and the latter one follows the first one. They vie with each other in (the matter of) this lowly world, and leap over this stinking carcass. Shortly the follower will denounce his connection with the leader, and the leader with the follower. They will disunite on account of mutual and curse one another when they meet. Then after this there will appear another arouser of mischief who will destroy ruined things. The heart will become wavering after being normal, men will be misled after safety, desires will multiply and become diversified and views will become confused.

Whoever proceeds towards this mischief will be ruined and whoever strives for it will be annihilated. They will be biting each other during it as the wild asses bite each other in the herd. The coils of the rope will be disturbed and the face of affairs will be blinded. During it sagacity will be on the ebb, and the oppressors will (get the opportunity to) speak. This mischief will smash the Bedouins with its hammers and crush them with its chest. In its dust the single marchers will be lost, and in its way the horsemen will be destroyed. It will approach with the bitterness of destiny and will give pure blood (instead of milk). It will breach the minarets of faith and shatter the ties of firm belief. The wise will run away from it while the wicked will foster it. It will thunder and flash (like lightning). It will create a severe disaster. In it kinship will be forsaken and Islam will be abandoned. He who declaims it will also be affected by it, and he who flees from it will (be forced to) stay in it.

A part of the same sermon

Among them some will be unavenged martyrs and some will be stricken with fear and seek protection. They will be deceived by pledges and fraudulent belief. You should not become landmarks of mischiefs and signs of innovations but should adhere to that on which the rope of the community has been wound and on which the pillars of obedience have been founded. Proceed towards Alláh as oppressed and do not proceed to Him as oppressors. Avoid the paths of Satan and the places of revolt. Do not put in your bellies unlawful morsels because you are facing Him Who has made disobedience unlawful for you, and made the path of obedience easy for you.

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SERMON 151

About the greatness and the attributes of Alláh (1)

Praise be to Alláh who is proof of His existence through His creation, of His being external through the newness of His creation, and through their mutual similarities of the fact that nothing is similar to Him. Senses cannot touch Him and curtains cannot veil Him, because of the difference between the Maker and the made, the Limiter and the limited and the Sustainer and the sustained.

He is One but not by the first in counting, is Creator but not through activity or labour, is Hearer but not by means of any physical organ, is Looker but not by a stretching of eyelids, is Witness but not by nearness, is Distinct but not by measurement of distance, is Manifest but not by seeing and is Hidden but not by subtlety (of body). He is Distinct from things because He overpowers them and exercises might over them, while things are distinct from Him because of their subjugation to Him and their turning towards Him.

He who describes Him limits Him. He who limits Him numbers Him. He who numbers Him rejects His eternity. He who said "how" sought a description for Him. He who said "where" bounded him. He is the Knower even though there be nothing to be known. He is the Sustainer even though there be nothing to be sustained. He is the Powerful even though there be nothing to be overpowered.

A part of the same sermon about the Divine leaders (Imáms)

The riser has risen, the sparkler has sparkled, the appearer has appeared and the curved has been straightened. Alláh has replaced one people with another and one day with another. We awaited these changes as the famine-stricken await the rain. Certainly the Imáms are the vicegerents of Alláh over His creatures and they make the creatures know Alláh. No one will enter Paradise except he who knows them and knows Him, and no one will enter Hell except he who denies them and denies Him.

Alláh the Glorified, has distinguished you with Islám and has chosen you for it. This is because it is the name of safety and the collection of honour. Alláh the Glorified, chose its way and disclosed its pleas through open knowledge and secret maxims. Its (Qur'án)wonders are not exhausted and its delicacies do not end. It contains blossoming bounties and lamps of darkness. (The doors of) virtues cannot be opened save with its keys, nor can gloom be dispelled save with its lamps. Alláh has protected its inaccessible points (from enemies) and allowed grazing (to its followers) in its pastures. It contains cover (from the ailment of misguidance) for the seeker of cure and full support for the seeker of support.

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(1). The first part of this sermon consists of important issues concerning the science of knowledge about Alláh, wherein Amír al-mu'minín has thrown light on the matter that Alláh is from ever and His attributes are the same as He Himself. When we cast a glance at creation, we see that for every movement there is a mover, from which every man of ordinary wisdom is compelled to conclude that no effect can appear without a cause, so much so, that even an infant a few days old, when his body is touched, feels in the depth of his consciousness that someone has touched him. He indicates it by opening his eyes or turning and looking. How then can the creation of the world and the system of all creation be arranged without a Creator or Organiser?

Once it is necessary to believe in a Creator, then He should exist by Himself, because everything which has a beginning must have a centre of existence from which it should terminate. If that too needed a creator, there would be the question of whether this creator is also the creation of some other creator or exists by itself. Thus unless a Self-created Creator is believed in, who should be the cause of all causes, the mind will remain groping in the unending labyrinth of cause and effect, and never attain the idea of the last extremity of the series of creation. It would fall into the fallacy of circular arguing and would not reach any end.

If the creator were taken to have created himself, then there would be (one of the two positions, namely) either he should be non-existent or existent. If he were not existent, then it would not be possible for something non-existent to create any existent being. If he were existent before creating himself, there would be no sense in coming into being again. Therefore it is necessary to believe that the Creator should be a Being not dependent on any other creator for His own existence, and everything else should be dependent on Him. This dependence of the entire creation

is a proof that the existence of the Source of all creation is from ever and eternal. And since all beings other than He are subject to change, are dependent on position and place and are similar to one another in qualities and properties, and since similarity leads to plurality whereas unity has no like save itself, therefore nothing can be like Him.

Even things called one cannot be reckoned after His Unity because He is One and Singular in every respect. He is free and pure from all those attributes which are found in body or matter because He is neither body, nor colour, nor shape, nor does He lie in any direction, nor is He bounded within some place or locality. Therefore, man cannot see or understand Him through his senses or feelings, because senses can know only those things which accord with the limitations of time, place and matter. To believe that He can be seen is to believe that He has body, but since He is not a body, and He does not exist through a body, and He does not lie in any direction or place, there is no question of His being seen. But His being unseen is not like that of subtle material bodies, due to whose delicacy the eye pierces through them and eyes remain unable to see them; as for example the wind in the vast firmament. But He is unseen by His very existence. Nevertheless, nothing is unseen for Him. He sees as well as hears, but is not dependent on instruments of seeing or hearing, because if He were in need of organs of the body for hearing and seeing He would be in need of external things for His perfection and would not be a perfect Being, whereas He should be perfect in all respects and no attribute of perfection should be apart from His Self.

To believe in attributes separately from His Self would mean that there would be a self and a few attributes and the compound of the self and the attributes would be Alláh. But a thing which is compounded is dependent on its parts and these parts must exist before their composition into the whole. When the parts exist from before, how can the whole be from ever and eternal because its existence is later than that of its parts. But Alláh had the attributes of knowledge, power and sustaining even when nothing was existent, because none of His attributes were created in Him from outside, but His attributes are His Self and His Self is His attributes. Consequently, His knowledge does not depend on the object of knowledge existing first and then His knowledge, because His Self is prior to things coming into existence. Nor is it necessary for His power that there should first exist the object to be over-powered and then alone He would be called Powerful, because Powerful is that who has power equally for doing or abandoning and as such the existence of the object to be over-powered is not necessary.

Similarly Sustainer means master. Just as He is the Master of the non-existent after its coming into existence, in the same way He has power to bring it into existence from non-existence, namely if He so wills He may bestow existence upon it.

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SERMON 152

About negligent persons and the characteristics of beasts, carnivores and women

He has been allowed time by Alláh. He is falling into error along with negligent persons and goes early in the morning with sinners, without any road to lead or any Imám to guide.

A part of the same sermon

At last when Alláh will make clear to them the reward for their sins, and take them out from the veils of their neglectfulness they will proceed to what they were running away from, and run away from what they were proceeding to. They will not benefit from the wants they will satisfy or the desires they would fulfil.

I warn you and myself from this position. A man should derive benefit from his own self. Certainly, prudent is he who hears and ponders over it, who sees and observes and who benefits from instructive material and then treads on clear paths wherein he avoids falling into hollows and straying into pitfalls, and does not assist those who misguide him by turning away from truthfulness, changing his words, or fearing truth.

O' my listener! Be cured from your intoxication, wake up from your slumber, decrease your hasty activity and ponder over what has come to you through the Holy Prophet, the *Ummí* (1) which is inevitable and inescapable. You should turn away from him who opposes him and leave him and leave whatever he has adopted for himself. Put off your vanity, drop your haughtiness and recall your grave because your way passes over it. You will be dealt with as you deal with others, you will reap what you sow, and what you send today will meet you tomorrow. So provide for your future and send (some good acts) for your day (of reckoning). Fear, fear, O' listener! Act, act, O' careless! No one will warn you like him who knows.

One of the firm decisions of Alláh in the Wise Reminder (Qur'án) upon which He bestows reward or gives punishment, and through which He likes or dislikes is that it will not benefit a man, even though he exerts himself and acts sincerely if he leaves this world to meet Alláh with one of these acts without repenting, namely that he believed in a partner with Alláh during his obligatory worship, or appeased his own anger by killing an individual, or spoke about acts committed by others, or sought fulfilment of his needs from people by introducing an innovation in his religion, or met people with a double face, or moved among them with a double tongue. Understand this because an illustration is a guide for its like.

Beasts are concerned with their bellies. Carnivores are concerned with assaulting others. Women are concerned with the adornments of this ignoble life and the creation of mischief herein (2). (On the other hand) believers are humble, believers are admonishers and believers are afraid (of Alláh).

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(1). The word *"ummí"* has been used in the Holy Qur'án with reference to the Holy Prophet in chapter 7:157-158. For better understanding of the word refer to the books of commentary on the Holy Qur'án.

(2). The intention is to say that the cause of all mischief and evil is the passion to satisfy bodily needs and the passion to subdue. If a human being is subjugated by the passion to satisfy bodily needs and considers filling the stomach as his aim there will be no difference between him and a beast, because a beast too has no aim except to fill its belly. But if he is over-powered by the passion to subdue others and takes to killing and devastation there will be no difference between him and a carnivorous beast, because the latter's aim is also tearing and devouring. If both the passions are at work in him then he is like a woman, because in a woman both these passions act side by side and because of this she is extremely eager of adornment and is active in fanning mischief and disturbance. However, a true believer will never agree to adopt these habits as his mode of behaviour, rather he keeps his passions suppressed so that he neither allows pride and vanity to approach near him nor does he fan mischief or disturbance for fear of Alláh.

Ibn Abi'l-hadíd has written that Amír al-mu'minín delivered this sermon at the time of marching towards Basrah, and since the trouble of Basrah was the result of a woman's instigation, Amír al-mu'minín has, after mentioning beasts and carnivore, held a woman also to possess such qualities. Thus the battle of Basrah was the result of these qualities, whereby thousands of persons were involved in death and destruction.

SERMON 153

About the Ahlu'l-bayt (of the Holy Prophet) and their opposers

He who has an intelligent mind looks to his goal. He knows his low road as well as his high road. The caller has called. The shepherd has tended (his flocks). So respond to the caller and follow the shepherd.

They (the opposers) have entered the oceans of disturbance and have taken to innovations instead of the *Sunnah* (the Prophet's holy deeds, utterances and his unspoken approvals), while the believers have sunk down, and the misguided and the liars are speaking. We are the near ones, companions, treasure holders and doors (to the *Sunnah*). Houses are not entered save through their doors. Whoever
enters them from other than the door is called a thief.

A part of the same sermon

The delicacies of the Qur'án are about them (Ahlu'l-bayt, the descendants of the Prophet) and they are the treasurers of Alláh. When they speak they speak the truth, but when they keep quiet no one can speak unless they speak. The forerunner should report correctly to his people, should retain his wits and should be one of the children (a man) of the next world, because he has come from there and would return to it.

The beginning of the action of one who sees with heart and acts with eyes it is to assess whether the action will go against him or for him. If it is for him he indulges in it, but if it is against him he keeps away from it. For, he who acts without knowledge is like one who treads without a path. Then his deviation from the path keeps him at a distance from his aim. And he who acts according to knowledge is like he who treads the clear path. Therefore, he who can see should see whether he should proceed or return.

You should also know that the outside (of every thing) has a similar inside. Of whatever the outside is good, its inside too is good, and whatever the outside is bad, its inside too is bad. The truthful Prophet (peace and blessing of Alláh be upon him and his progeny) has said that: "Alláh may love a man but hate his action, and may love the action but hate the man." You should also know that every action is like a vegetation, and a vegetation cannot do without water while waters are different. So where the water is good the plant is good and its fruits are sweet, whereas where the water is bad. the plant will also be bad and its fruits will be bitter.

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SERMON 154

About the wonderful creation of the bat

Praise be to Alláh who is such that it is not possible to describe the reality of knowledge about Him, since His greatness has restrained the intellects, and therefore they cannot find the way to approach the extremity of His realm. He is Alláh, the True, the Manifester of Truth. He is more True and more Manifest than eyes can see. Intellects cannot comprehend Him by fixing limits for Him since in that case to Him would be attributed shape. Imagination cannot catch Him by fixing quantities for Him for in that case to Him would be attributed body. He created creatures without any example, and without the advice of a counsel, or the assistance of a helper. His creation was completed by His command, and bowed to His obedience. It responded (to Him) and did not defy (Him). It obeyed and did not resist.

An example of His delicate production, wonderful creation and deep sagacity which He has shown us is found in these bats which keep hidden in the daylight although daylight reveals everything else, and are mobile in the night although the night shuts up every other living being; and how their eyes get dazzled and cannot make use of the light of the sun so as to be guided in their movements and so as to reach their known places through the direction provided by the sun.

Alláh has prevented them from moving in the brightness of the sun and confined them to their places of hiding instead of going out at the time of its shining. Consequently they keep their eyelids down in the day and treat night as a lamp and go with its help in search of their livelihood. The darkness of night does not obstruct their sight nor does the gloom of darkness prevent them from movement. As soon as the sun removes its veil and the light of morning appears, and the rays of its light enter upon the lizards in their holes, the bats pull down their eyelids on their eyes and live on what they had collected in the darkness of the night. Glorified is He who has made the night as day for them to seek livelihood and made the day for rest and stay.

He has given them wings of flesh with which, at the time of need they rise upwards for flying. They look like the ends of ears without feathers or bones. Of course, you can see the veins quite distinctly. They have two wings which are neither too thin so that they get turned in flying, nor too thick so that they prove heavy. When they fly, their young ones hold on to them and seek refuge with them, getting down when they get down and rising up when they rise. The young does not leave them till its limbs become strong, its wings can support it for rising up, and it begins to recognise its places of living and its interest. Glorified is He who creates everything without any previous sample by someone else.

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SERMON 155

About the malice borne by `Á'ishah; and warning the people of Basrah about what was to occur

Whoever can at this time keep himself clinging to Alláh should do so. If you follow me I shall certainly carry you, if Alláh so wills, on the path of Paradise, even though it may be full of severe hardship and of bitter taste.

As regards a certain woman (1), she is in the grip of womanly views, and malice is boiling in her bosom like the furnace of the blacksmith. If she were called upon to deal with others as she is dealing with me she would not have done it. (As for me), even hereafter she will be allowed her original respect, while the reckoning (of her misdeeds) is an obligation on Alláh.

A part of the same sermon

This path is the lightest course and the brightest lamp. Guidance towards virtuous actions is sought through faith while guidance towards faith is achieved through virtuous actions. Knowledge is made to prosper through faith, and death is feared because of knowledge. This world come to an end with death, while the next world is secured (by virtuous actions) in this world. For people there is no escape from resurrection. They are heading for this last end in its appointed course.

A part of the same sermon

They have got up from the resting places in their graves and have set off for the final objectives. Every house has its own people. They are not changed nor shifted from there. Commanding for good and refraining from evil are two characteristics of Alláh, the Glorified. They can neither bring death near nor lessen sustenance.

You should adhere to the Book of Alláh because it is the strong rope, a clear light, a benefiting cure, a quenching for thirst, protection for the adherent and deliverance for the attached. It does not curve so as to need straightening and does not deflect so as to be corrected. Frequency of its repetition and its falling on ears does not make it old. Whoever speaks according to it, speaks truth and whoever acts by it is forward (in action).

A man stood up and said: O' Amír al-mu'minín, tell us about this disturbance and whether you enquired about it from the Holy Prophet.

Thereupon Amír al-mu'minín said:

When Alláh, the Glorified sent down the verse:

> *Alif lám mím. What! Do people imagine that they will be let off on* (their) *saying: "We believe!" and they will not be tried?* (Qur'án, 29:1-2)

I came to know that the disturbance would not befall us so long as the Prophet (peace and blessing of Alláh be upon him and his progeny) is among us. So I said, "O' Prophet of Alláh, what is this disturbance of which Alláh, the Sublime, has informed you?" and he replied, "O' `Alí, my people will create trouble after me." I said, "O' Prophet of Alláh, on the day of Uhud, when people had fallen martyrs and I was not among them, and this had been very annoying to me, did you not say to me, 'cheer up, as martyrdom is for you hereafter?' "The Prophet replied, "Yes it is so, but what about your enduring at present?" I said, "O' Prophet of Alláh, this is not an occasion for endurance, but rather an occasion for cheering up and gratefulness." Then he said:

"O' `Alí, people will fall into mischief through their wealth, will show obligation to Alláh on account of their faith, will expect His mercy, will feel safe from His anger and regard His unlawful matters as lawful by raising false doubts and by their misguiding desires. They will then hold lawful (the use of) wine by calling it barley water, a bribe by calling it a gift, and taking of usurious interest by calling it sale." I said, "O' Prophet of Alláh, how should I deal with them at the time, whether to hold them to have gone back in heresy or just in revolt." He said, "in revolt."

(1). There is no denying the fact that `Á'ishah's behaviour towards Amír al-mu'minín was throughout inimical, and very often her heart's turbidity expressed itself on her face, and her hatred and dislike became quite apparent, so much so that if in connection with some affair Amír al-mu'minín's name came up a frown appeared on her forehead and she did not relish pronouncing it with her tongue. For example, when `Ubaydulláh ibn `Abdilláh ibn `Utbah mentioned to `Abdulláh ibn `Abbás the narration by `Á'ishah namely that "in his death-illness the Prophet, taking support on al-Fa_l ibn `Abbás and another person, came to her (`Á'ishah's) house," `Abdulláh ibn `Abbás said:

"Do you know who this 'other man' was?" He said, "No." Then he said, ' "`Alí ibn Abí Tálib, but she is averse to name him in a good context." (Ahmad ibn Hanbal, *al-Musnad*, vol. 6, pp. 34, 228; Ibn Sa`d, *at-Tabaqát al-Kabír*, vol. 2, part 2, p. 29; at-Tabarí, *at-Táríkh*, vol. 1, pp. 1800-1801; al-Baládhurí, Ansáb al-ashráf, vol. 1, pp. 544-545; al-Bayhaqí, *as-Sunan al-kubrá*, vol. 3, p. 396).

One cause for this hatred and malice was the presence of Ha_rat Fátimah (p.b.u.h.) whose wholesome dignity and esteem pricked her heart like a thorn. Her jealousy towards the other wives (of the Prophet) did not allow her to let the Prophet love the daughter of his other wife to such a degree that he should stand on her approach, seat her in his own place, declare her most honourable of all the women of the world and bear such love towards her children as to call them his own sons.

All these things pained her much and naturally her feelings on such an occasion were that if she had borne children they would have been the Prophet's sons and they would have been the pivot of the Prophet's affection instead of Imám Hasan and Imám Husayn. But she was not gifted with any issue and she gratified her own desire to be a mother by adopting the surname Umm `Abdilláh (mother of the slave of Alláh) after her sister's son. In short all these things created the passion of hatred in her heart, as a result of which she off and on complained to the Prophet against Ha_rat Fátimah but could not succeed in diverting the Prophet's attention from her.

News about this mortification and estrangement also reached the ears of Abú Bakr. That would only perturb him as he too could do nothing, except that his verbal sympathies were with his daughter. At last the Prophet left this world and the reins of Government fell into his hands. Now was the opportunity for him to avenge as best as he could and to perpetrate whatever violence he had in mind. Consequently the first step he took was that, in order to deprive Ha_rat Fátimah of inheritance, he denied the principle of inheritance in the case of the prophets and held that neither do the prophets inherit nor are they inherited from, but the property left by them escheats to the state. Fátimah was so much affected that she gave up speaking to him and passed away from this world with these very feelings. `Á'ishah did not even take the trouble to express any sorrow at her tragic death. Thus Ibn Abi'l-hadíd has written:

> "When Fátimah expired, all the wives of the Prophet came to Baní Háshim in condolence except `Á'ishah. She did not come and showed herself sick and words from her reached `Alí which displayed her joy." (*Sharh Nahj al-balághah*, vol. 9, p. 198).

As long as she bore so much malice against Ha_rat Fátimah, how could Fátimah's spouse be spared similar enmity and malice. Particularly when such events also occurred which worked like a fan and roused her feeling of hatred, such as the incident of "Ifk" when Amír al-mu'minín said to the Prophet: "She is no better than the buckles of your shoe, leave her and divorce her away." On hearing this `Á'ishah must have felt miserable in her bed, and must have developed the severest feeling of hatred against him. There were also moments when distinction was conferred on Amír al-mu'minín in preference to Abú Bakr. For instance, in connection with the dispatch of the Qur'ánic verses on *Bará'ah* (innocence), the Prophet removed Abú Bakr from the job, recalled him and assigned it to Amír al-mu'minín saying that he had been commanded by Alláh to take it himself or send it through a member of his family. Similarly the Prophet closed all the doors opening into the mosque including that of Abú Bakr but allowed the door of Amír al-mu'minín's house to continue to open thereinto.

`Á'ishah could not relish Amír al-mu'minín's distinction over her father, and whenever there was any occasion for such distinction she did her best to undo it. When in his last days the Prophet ordered the contingent under Usámah ibn Zayd to march, and ordered Abú Bakr and `Umar also to go under his command, they received a message from the wives of the Prophet that his condition was serious and therefore the contingent should come back instead of proceeding further. This was because their far-reaching sight had realised that the only purpose in getting Medina vacated by the *muhájirún* and the *ansár* could be that after the death of the Prophet no one should stand in Amír al-mu'minín's way and that he should get the caliphate without any trouble. On receipt of this message the contingent under Usámah came back. When the Prophet learnt this he again ordered Usámah to march with the contingent and even said, "Alláh may curse him who keeps away from the contingent," whereupon they again set off, but they were again called back till the Prophet's illness assumed serious proportions, but Usámah's contingent did not go out as it did

not want to. After this Abú Bakr was sent word through Bilál that he should deputise the Prophet in leading the prayers in order to pave the way for his Caliphateship. Accordingly, keeping this in view he was first shown as the Prophet's caliph (deputy) in prayers and eventually was accepted as his caliph for all purposes. Thereafter matters were so contrived that Amír al-mu'minín could not get the Caliphate. However, after the reign of the third caliph circumstances took such a turn that people were obliged to swear allegiance at Amír al-mu'minín's hand. On this occasion `Á'ishah was present in Mecca. When she learnt about Amír al-mu'minín's caliphate her eyes began emitting flames, and rage and anger perturbed her mind, and her hatred for Amír al-mu'minín assumed such seriousness that she rose against him on the excuse of avenging blood of the same man (`Uthmán) whom she had herself proclaimed fit to be killed, and openly declared war as a result of which so much bloodshed occurred that the whole land of Basrah was smeared with the blood of those killed, and the door of disunity was opened for good. (*Sharh,* Ibn Abi'l-hadíd, vol. 9, pp. 190-200).

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SERMON 156

Urging people towards Piety (taqwa)

Praise be to Alláh who made praise the Key for His remembrance, a means for increase of His bounty and a guide for His Attributes and Dignity.

O’ creatures of Alláh! Time will deal with the survivors just as it dealt with those gone by. The time that has passed will not return and whatever there is in it will not stay for ever. Its later deeds are the same as the former ones. Its trouble try to excel one another. Its banners follow each other. It is as though you are attached to the last day which is driving you as rapidly as are driven the she camels which are dry for seven months. He who busies himself with things other than improvement of his own self becomes perplexed in darkness and entangled in
ruination. His evil spirits immerse him deep in vices and make his bad actions appear handsome. Paradise is the end of those who are forward (in good acts) and Hell is the end of those who commit excesses.

Know O’ creatures of Alláh! that piety is a strong house of protection while impiety is a weak house which does not protect its people, and does not give security to him who takes refuge therein. Know that the sting of sins is cut by piety and the final aim is achieved by conviction of belief.

O’ creatures of Alláh! (fear) Alláh, (fear) Alláh, in the matter of your own selves, which are the most beloved and dear to you, because Alláh has clarified to you the way of truthfulness and lighted its paths. So (you may choose) either ever-present misfortune or eternal happiness. You should therefore provide in these mortal days for the eternal days. You have been informed of the provision, ordered to march and told to make haste in setting off. You are like staying riders who do not know when they would be ordered to march on. Beware, what will he, who has been created for the next world, do with this world? What will a person do with wealth which he would shortly be deprived of while only its ill effects and reckoning would be left behind for him?

O’ creatures of Alláh! the good which Alláh has promised should not be abandoned and the evil from which He has refrained should not be coveted. O’ creatures of Alláh! fear the day when actions will be reckoned; there will be much quaking and even children will get old.

Know, O’ creatures of Alláh! that your own self is a guard over you; limbs are watchmen and truthful vigil-keepers who preserve (the record of) your actions and the numbers of your breaths. The gloom of the dark night cannot conceal you from them, nor can closed doors hide you from them. Surely tomorrow is close to today.

Today will depart with all that it has and tomorrow will come in its wake. It is as though every one of you has reached that place on earth where he would be alone, namely the location of his grave. So, what to say of the lonely house, the solitary place of staying and the solitary exile. It is as though the cry (of the Horn) has reached you, the Hour has overtaken you and you have come out (of your graves) for the passing of judgement. (The curtains of) falsehood have been removed from you and your excuses have become weak. The truth about you has been proved. All your matters have proceeded to their consequences. Therefore. you should (now) take counsel from examples, learn lessons from vicissitudes and take advantage of the warners.

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SERMON 157

About the Holy Prophet and the Holy Qur'án

Alláh deputed the Prophet at a time when there had been no prophets for some time. People had been in slumber for a long time and the twist of the rope had loosened. The Prophet came with (a Book containing) testification to what (books) were already there and also with a light to be followed. It is the Qur'án. If you ask it to speak it won't do so; but I will tell you about it. Know that it contains knowledge of what is to come about, stories of the past, cure for your ills and regulation for whatever faces you.

A part of the same sermon
About the autocracy of the Umayyads

At that time there will remain no house or tent but oppressors would inflict it with grief and inject sickness in it. On that day no one in the sky will listen to their excuse and no one on the earth will come to their help. You selected for the governance (caliphate) one who is not fit for it, and you raised him to a position which was not meant for him. Shortly Alláh will take revenge from every one who has oppressed, food for food and drink for drink, namely (they will be given) colocynth for eating, myrrh and aloes for drinking, and fear for an inner and the sword for an outer covering.

They are nothing but carrier-beasts laden with sins and camels laden with evil deeds. I swear and again swear that the Umayyads will have to spit out the caliphate as phlegm is spat and thereafter they will never taste it nor relish its flavour so long as day and night rotate.

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SERMON 158

Good behaviour with people and ignoring their faults

I lived as a good neighbour to you and tried my best to look after you, and I freed you from the snare of humbleness and the fetters of oppression through my gratefulness for the little good (from your side) and closed my eyes to your many misdeeds which my eyes had observed and my body had witnessed.

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SERMON 159

Praise of Alláh

Alláh's verdict is judicious and full of wisdom. His pleasure implies protection and mercy. He decides with knowledge and forgives with forbearance.

O' my Alláh! Praise be to Thee for what Thou takest and givest and for that from which Thou curest or with which Thou afflictest; praise which is the most acceptable to Thee, the most like by Thee and the most dignified before Thee; praise which fills all Thy creation and reaches where Thou desirest; praise which is not veiled from Thee and does not end, and whose continuity does not cease.

Greatness of Alláh

We do not know the reality of Thy greatness except that we know that thou art Ever-living and Self-subsisting by Whom all things subsist. Drowsiness or sleep do not overtake Thee, vision does not reach Thee and sight does not grasp Thee. Thou seest the eyes and countest the ages. Thou holdest (people as slaves) by foreheads and feet. We see Thy creation and wonder over it because of Thy might, and describe it as (a result of) Thy great authority; whereas what is hidden from us, of which our sight has fallen short, which our intelligence has not attained, and between which and ourselves curtains of the unknown have been cast, is far greater.

He who frees his heart (from all other engagements) and exerts his thinking in order to know how Thou established Thy throne, how Thou created Thy creatures, how Thou suspended the air in Thy skies and how Thou spread Thy earth on the waves of water, his eyes would return tired, his intelligence defeated, his ears eager and his thinking awander.

A part of the same sermon about hope and fear in Alláh.

He claims according to his own thinking that he hopes from Alláh. By Alláh, the Great, he speaks a lie. The position is that his hope (in Alláh) does not appear through his action although the hope of every one who hopes is known through his action. Every hope is so, except the hope in Alláh, the Sublime, if it is impure; and every fear is established except the fear for Alláh if it is unreal.

He hopes big things from Alláh and small things from men but he gives to man (such consideration as) he does not give to Alláh. What is the matter with Alláh, glorified be His praise? He is accorded less (consideration) than what is given to His creatures. Do you ever fear to be false in your hope in Alláh? Or do you not regard Him the centre of your hope? Similarly, if a man fears man he gives him (such consideration) out of his fear which he does not give to Alláh. Thus, he has made his fear for men ready currency while his fear from the Creator is mere deferment or promise. This is the case of every one in whose eye this world appears big (and important) and in whose heart its position is great. He prefers it over Alláh, so he inclines towards it, and becomes its devotee.

The example of the Holy Prophet

Certainly, in the Prophet of Alláh (peace and blessing of Alláh be upon him and his progeny) was sufficient example for you and a proof concerning the vices of the world, its defects, the multitude of its disgraces and its evils, because its sides had been constrained for him, while its flanks had been spread for others; he was deprived of its milk and turned away from its adornments.

The example of Músá (Moses)

If you want, I will, as a second example, relate to you concerning Músá, the Interlocutor of Alláh (p.b.u.h.) when he said: *O' Alláh! I need whatever good Thou mayest grant me* (Qur'án, 28:24). By Alláh, he asked Him only for bread to eat because he was used to eating the herbs of the earth, and the greenness of the herbs could be seen from the delicate skin of his belly due to his thinness and paucity of his flesh.

The example of Dáwúd (David)

If you desire I can give you a third example of Dáwúd (p.b.u.h.). He is the holder of the Psalms and the reciter among the people of Paradise. He used to prepare baskets of date palm leaves with his own hands and would say to his companions: “Which of you will help me by purchasing it?” He used to eat barley bread (bought) out of its price.

The example of `Ísá (Jesus)

If you desire I will tell you about `Ísá (p.b.u.h.) son of Maryam (Mary). He used a stone for his pillow, put on coarse clothes and ate rough food. His condiment was hunger. His lamp at night was the moon. His shade during the winter was just the expanse of earth eastward and westward. His fruits and flowers were only what grows from the earth for the cattle. He had no wife to allure him, nor any son to give grief, nor wealth to deviate (his attention), nor greed to disgrace him. His two feet were his conveyance and his two hands his servant.

Following the example of the Holy Prophet

You should follow your Prophet, the pure, the chaste, may Alláh bless him and his descendants. In him is the example for the follower, and the consolation for the seeker of consolation. The most beloved person before Alláh is he who follows His Prophet and who treads in his footsteps. He took the least (share) from this world and did not take a full glance at it. Of all the people of the world he was the least satiated and the most empty of stomach. The world was offered to him but he refused to accept it. When he knew that Alláh, the Glorified, hated a thing, he too hated it; that Alláh held a thing low, he too held it low; that Alláh held a thing small, he too held it small. If we love what Alláh and His Prophet hate and hold great what Alláh and His prophet hold small that would be enough isolation from Alláh and transgression of His commands.

The Prophet used to eat on the ground, and sat like a slave. He repaired his shoe with his hand, and patched his clothes with his hand. He would ride an unsaddled ass and would seat someone behind him. If there was a curtain on his door with pictures on it he would say to one of his wives. “O’ such-and-such, take it away out of my sight because if I look at it I recall the world and its allurements.” Thus, he removed his heart from this world and destroyed its remembrance from his mind. He loved that its allurements should remain hidden from his eye so that he should not secure good dress from it, should not regard it a place of stay and should not hope to live in it. Consequently, he removed it from his mind, let it go away from his heart and kept it hidden from his eyes. In the same way he who hates a thing should hate to look at it or to hear about it.

Certainly there was in the Prophet of Alláh all that would apprise you of the evils of this world and its defects, namely that he remained hungry along with his chief companions, and despite his great nearness the allurements of the world remained remote from him. Now, one should see with one’s intelligence whether Alláh honoured Muhammad (the peace and blessings of Alláh be upon him and his descendants) as a result of this or disgraced him. If he says that Alláh disgraced him, he certainly lies and perpetrates a great untruth. If he says Alláh honoured him, he should know that Alláh dishonoured the others when He extended the (benefits of the) world for him but held them away from him who was the nearest to Him of all men.

Therefore, one should follow His Prophet, tread in his footsteps and enter through his entrance. Otherwise he will not be safe from ruin. Certainly, Alláh made Muhammad (the peace and blessing of Alláh be upon him and his descendants) a sign for the Day of Judgement. a conveyor of tidings for Paradise and a warner of retribution. He left this world hungry but entered upon the next world safe. He did not lay one stone upon another (to make a house) till he departed and responded to the call of Alláh. How great is Alláh’s blessing in that He blessed us with the Prophet as a predecessor whom we follow and a leader behind whom we tread.

The example of himself

By Alláh, I have been putting patches in my shirts so much that now I feel shy of the patcher. Someone asked me whether I would not put it off, but I said, “Get away from me.” Only in the morning do people (realised the advantage of and) speak highly of the night journey.

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SERMON 160

Deputation of the Holy Prophet

Alláh deputed the Prophet with a sparkling light, a clear argument, an open path and a guiding book. His tribe is the best tribe and his lineal tree the best lineal tree whose branches are in good proportion and fruits hanging (in plenty). His birth-place was Mecca, and the place of his immigration Taybah (Medina), from where his name rose high and his voice spread far and wide.

Alláh sent him with a sufficing plea, a convincing discourse and a rectifying announcement. Through him Alláh disclosed the ways that had been forsaken, and destroyed the innovations that had been introduced. Through him He explained the detailed commands. Now, whoever adopts a religion other than Islam, his misery is definite, his stick (of support) will be cracked, his fate will be serious, his end will be long grief and distressing punishment.

Drawing lessons from this world

I trust in Alláh, the trust of bending towards Him, and I seek His guidance for the way that leads to His Paradise and takes to the place of His pleasure. I advise you, O' creatures of Alláh, to exercise fear of Alláh and to obey Him because it is salvation tomorrow and deliverance for ever. He warned (you of chastisement) and did so thoroughly. He persuaded (you towards virtues) and did so fully. He described this world, its cutting away from you, its decay and its shifting. Therefore, keep aloof from its attractions, because very little of it will accompany you. This house is the closest to the displeasure of Alláh and the
remotest from the pleasure of Alláh.

So close your eyes, O' creatures of Alláh, from its worries and engagements, because you are sure about its separation and its changing conditions. Fear it like a sincere fearer and one who struggles hard, and take a lesson from what you have seen about the falling places of those before you, namely that their joints were made to vanish, their eyes and ears were destroyed, their honour and prestige disappeared and their pleasure and wealth came to an end. The nearness of their children changed into remoteness. The company of their spouses changed into separation with them. They do not boast over each other, nor do they beget children nor meet each other nor live as neighbours. Therefore, fear O' creature of Alláh, like the fear of one who has control over himself, who can check his passions and perceive with his wisdom. Surely, the matter is quite clear, the banner is standing, the course is level and the way is straight.

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SERMON 161

One of Amír al-mu'minín's companions (from Banú Asad) asked him: "How was it that your tribe (Quraysh) deprived you of this position (Caliphate) although you deserved it most." Then in reply he said:

O' brother of Banú Asad! Your girth is loose and you have put it on the wrong way. Nevertheless you enjoy in-law kinship and also the right to ask, and since you have asked, listen. As regards the oppression against us in this matter although we were the highest as regards descent and the strongest in relationship with the Messenger of Alláh. It was a selfish act over which the hearts of people became greedy, although some people did not care for it. The Arbiter is Alláh and to Him is the return on the Day of Judgement.

"Now leave this story of devastation about which there is hue and cry all round." (1)

Come and look at the son of Abú Sufyán (Mu`áwiyah). Time has made me laugh after weeping. No wonder, by Alláh; what is this affair which surpasses all wonder and which has increased wrongfulness. These people have tried to put out the flame of Alláh's light from His lamp and to close His fountain from its source. They mixed epidemic-producing water between me and themselves. If the trying hardships were removed from among us, I would take them on the course of truthfulness otherwise:

"... So let not thy self go (in vain) in grief for them; verily Alláh knoweth all that they do." (Qur'án, 35:8)

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(1). This is a hemistich from the couplet of the famous Arab poet Imriu'l-Qays al-Kindí. The second hemistich is:

"And let me know the story of what happened to the riding camels."

The incident behind this couplet is that when the father of Imriu'l-Qays namely Hujr ibn al-hárith was killed, he roamed about the various Arab tribes to avenge his father's life with their help. In this connection he stayed with a man of Jadílah (tribe) but finding himself unsafe left that place, and stayed with Khálid ibn Sadús an-Nabhání. In the meantime a man of Jadílah named Bá`ith ibn Huways drove away some of his camels. Imriu'l-Qays complained of this matter to his host and he asked him to send with him his she-camels then he would get back his camels.

Consequently, Khálid went to those people and asked them to return the camels of his guest which they had robbed. They said that he was neither a guest nor under his protection. Thereupon Khálid swore that he was really his guest and showed them his she-camels that he had with him. They then agreed to return the camels. But actually instead of returning the camels they drove away the she-camels as well. One version is that they did return the camels to Khálid but instead of handing them over to Imriu'l-Qays he kept them for himself. When Imriu'l-Qays came to know this he composed a few couplets out of which this is one. It means 'now you leave the story of these camels which were robbed but now let me know about the she-camels snatched from my hands.'

Amír al-mu'minín's intention in quoting this verse as an illustration is that "Now that Mu`áwiyah is at war, we should talk about and should leave the discussion about the devastation engendered by those who had usurped my rights. That time has gone away. Now is the time for grappling with the mischiefs of the hour. So discuss the event of the moment and do not start untimely strain." Amír al-mu'minín said this because the man had put the question to him at the time of the battle of Siffín, when the battle was raging and bloodshed was in full swing.

SERMON 162

Attributes of Alláh

Praise be to Alláh, Creator of people; He has spread the earth. He makes streams to flow and vegetation to grow on high lands. His primality has no beginning, nor has His eternity any end. He is the First and from ever. He is the everlasting without limit. Foreheads bow before Him and lips declare His oneness. He determined the limits of things at the time of His creating them, keeping Himself away from any likeness.

Imagination cannot surmise Him within the limits of movements limbs or senses. It cannot be said about Him: "whence"; and no time limit can be attributed to Him by saying "till". He is apparent, but it cannot be said "from what". He is hidden, but it cannot be said "in what". He is not a body which can die, nor is He veiled so as to be enclosed therein. He is not near to things by way of touch, nor is He remote from them by way of separation.

The gazing of people's eyes is not hidden from Him, nor the repetition of words, nor the glimpse of hillocks, nor the tread of a footstep in the dark night or in the deep gloom, where the shining moon casts its light and the effulgent sun comes in its wake, through its setting and appearing again and again with the rotation of time and periods, by the approach of the advancing night or the passing away of the running day.

He precedes every extremity and limit, and every counting and numbering. He is far above what those whose regard is limited attribute to Him, such as the qualities of measure, having extremities, living in house and dwelling in abodes, because limits are meant for creation and are attributable only to other than Alláh.

Alláh, the Originator from naught

He did not create things from eternal matter nor after ever-existing examples, but He created whatever He created and then He fixed limits thereto, and He shaped whatever He shaped and gave the best shape thereto. Nothing can disobey Him, but the obedience of something is of no benefit to Him. His knowledge about those who died in the past is the same as His knowledge about the remaining survivors, and His knowledge about whatever there is in the high skies is like His knowledge of whatever there is in the low earth.

A part of the same sermon

About man's creation, and pointing towards the requirements of life.

O' creature who has been equitably created and who has been nurtured and looked after in the darkness of wombs with multiple curtains. You were originated *from the essence of clay* (Qur'án, 23:12) and placed *in a still place for a known length* (Qur'án, 77:21-22) and an ordained time. You used to move in the womb of your mother as an embryo, neither responding to a call nor hearing any voice.

Then you were taken out from your place of stay to a place you had not seen, and you were not acquainted with the means of awaiting its benefits, or with who guided you to eke out your sustenance from the udder of your mother, and, when your were in need, appraised you of the location of what you required or aimed at. Alas! Certainly he who is unable to understand the qualities of a being with shape and limbs is the more unable to understand the qualities of the Creator and the more remote from appreciating Him through the limitations of creatures.

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SERMON 163

When people went to Amír al-mu'minin in a deputation and complained to him through what they had to say against `Uthmán, and requested him to speak to him on their behalf and to admonish him for their sake, he went to see him and said: (1)

The people are behind me and they have made me an ambassador between you and themselves; but by Alláh, I do not know what to say to you. I know nothing (in this matter) which you do not know, nor can I lead you to any matter of which you are not aware. You certainly know what we know, we have not come to know anything before you which we could tell you; nor did we learn anything in secret which we should convey to you. You have seen as we have seen and you have heard as we have heard. You sat in the company of the Prophet of Alláh as we did. (Abú Bakr) Ibn Abí Quháfah and (`Umar) ibn al-Khattáb were no more responsible for acting righteously than you, since you are nearer than both of them to the Prophet of Alláh through kinship, and you also hold relationship to him by marriage which they do not hold.

Then (fear) Alláh, in your own self; for, by Alláh, you are not being shown anything as if you are blind or being apprised of anything as if you are ignorant. The ways are clear while the banners of faith are fixed. You should know that among the creatures of Alláh, the most distinguished person before Alláh is the just Imám who has been guided (by Alláh) and guides others. So, he stands by the recognised ways of the Prophet's behaviour and destroys unrecognised innovations. The (Prophet's) ways are clear and they have signs, while innovations are also clear and they too have signs. Certainly, the worst man before Alláh is the oppressive Imám who has gone astray and through whom others go astray. He destroys the the accepted *sunnah* and revives abandoned innovations. I heard the Messenger of Alláh saying: "On the Day of Judgement the oppressive Imám will be brought without anyone to support him or anyone to advance excuses on his behalf, and then he will be thrown into Hell where he will rotate as the hand-mill rotates, then (eventually) he will be confined to its hollow."

I swear to you by Alláh that you should not be that Imám of the people who will be killed because it has been said that, "An Imám of this people will be killed after which killing and fighting will be made open for them till the Day of Judgement, and he will confuse their matters and spread troubles over them. As a result, they will not discern truth from wrong. They will oscillate like waves and would be utterly misled." You should not behave as the carrying beast for Marwán so that he may drag you wherever he likes, despite (your) seniority of age and length of life.

Then `Uthmán said to Amír al-mu'minín: "Speak to the people to give me time until I redress their grievances." Amír al-mu'minín then said: "So far as Medina is concerned here is no question of time. As for remoter areas you can have the time needed for your order to reach there."

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(1). During the Caliphate of `Uthmán when the Muslims were weary of the oppression of the Government and its officials collected in Medina to complain to the senior companions of the Prophet, they came to Amír al-mu'minín in a peaceful manner and requested him to see `Uthmán and advise him not to trample on the Muslims' rights and to put an end to the troubles which were proving the cause of the people's ruin, whereupon Amír al-mu'minín went to him and uttered these words.

In order to make the bitterness of the admonition palatable Amír al-mu'minín adopted that way of speech in the beginning which would create a sense of responsibility in the addressee and direct him towards his obligations. Thus, by mentioning his companionship of the Prophet, his personal position, and his kinship to the Prophet as against the two previous Caliphs, his intention was to make him realise his duties; in any case, this was obviously not an occasion for eulogising him, so that its later portion can be disregarded and the whole speech be regarded as an eulogy of his attainments, because from its very beginning it is evident that whatever `Uthmán did, he did it wilfully, that nothing was done without his knowledge or his being informed, and that he could not be held unaccountable for it because of his being unaware of it. If the adoption of a line of action which made the whole Islamic world raise hue and cry in spite of his having being a companion of the Prophet, having heard his instructions, having seen his behaviour and having been acquainted with the commandments of Islam can be regarded as a distinction, then this taunt may also be regarded as praise. If that is not a distinction then this too cannot be called and eulogy. In fact, the words about which it is argued that they are in praise are enough to prove the seriousness of his crime, because a crime in ignorance and unawareness is not so serious as the weight given to the seriousness of the commission of a crime despite knowledge and awareness. Consequently a person who is unaware of the rise and fall of a road and stumbles in the

dark night is excusable but a person who is aware of the rise and fall of the road and stumbled in broad day light is liable to be blamed. If on this occasion he is told that he has eyes and is also aware of the rise and fall of the way, it would not mean that his vastness of knowledge or the brightness of his eye-sight is being praised, but the intention would be that he did not notice the pitfalls despite his eyes, and did not walk properly, and that therefore for him, having or not having eyes is the same, and knowing or not knowing is equal.

In this connection great stress in laid on his being a son-in-law, namely that the Prophet married his two daughters Ruqayyah and Umm Kulthúm to him one after the other. Before taking this to be a distinction, the real nature of `Uthmán's son-in-lawship should be seen. History shows that in this matter `Uthmán did not enjoy the distinction of being the first, but before him Ruqayyah and Umm Kulthúm had been married to two sons of Abú Lahab namely `Utbah and `Utaybah, but despite their being sons-in-law, they have not been included among people of position of pre-prophethood period. How then can this be regarded as a source of position without any personal merit, when there is no authority about the importance of this relationship, nor was any importance attached to this matter in such a way that there might have been some competition between `Uthmán and some other important personality in this regard and that his selection for it might have given him prominence, or that these two girls might have been shown to possess an important position in history, tradition or biography as a result of which this relationship could be given special importance and regarded as a distinction for him? If the marriage of these two daughters with `Utbah and `Utaybah in the pre-prophethood period is held as lawful on the ground that marriage with unbelievers had not till then been made unlawful, then in `Uthmán's case also the condition for lawfulness was his acceptance of Islam, there is no doubt that he had pronounced the *kalimah ash-shahádatayn* (there is no god but Alláh and Muhammad is His Messenger) and had accepted Islam outwardly. As such this marriage can be held a proof of his outward Islam, but no other honour can be proved through it. Again, it is also not agreed that these two were the real daughters of the Messenger of Alláh, because there is one group which denies them to be his real daughters, and regards them as being the daughters of Khadijah's sister Hálah, or the daughters of her own previous husband. Thus, Abu'l-Qásim al-Kúfí (d. 352 A.H.) writes:

> "When the Messenger of Alláh married Khadíjah, then some time thereafter Hálah died leaving two daughters, one named Zaynab and the other named Ruqayyah and both of them were brought up by the Prophet and Khadíjah and they maintained them, and it was the custom before Islam that a child was assigned to whoever brought him up." (*al-lstigháthah*, p. 69)

Ibn Hishám has written about the issues of Ha_rat Khadíjah as follows:

> "Before marriage with the Prophet she was married to Abí Hálah ibn Málik. She delivered for him Hind ibn Abí Hálah and Zaynab bint Abí Hálah. Before marriage with Abí Hálah she was married to `Utayyiq ibn `Ábid ibn `Abdilláh ibn `Amr ibn Makhzúm and she delivered for him `Abdulláh and a daughter." (*as-Sírah an-nabawiyyah*, vol. 4, p. 293)

This shows that of hazrat Khadíjah had two daughters before being married to the Prophet and according to all appearance they would be called his daughters and those to whom they were married would be called his sons-in-law, but the position of this relationship would be the same as if those girls were his daughters. Therefore, before putting it forth as a matter for pride the real status of the daughters should be noted and a glance should be cast at `Uthmán's conduct. In this connection, al-Bukhárí and other narrators (of traditions) and historians record this tradition as follows:

> Anas ibn Málik relates that: "We were present on the occasion of the burial of the Prophet's daughter Umm Kulthúm, while the Prophet was sitting beside her grave. I saw his eyes shedding tears. Then he said, 'Is there any one among you who has not committed a sin last night?' Abú Talhah (Zayd ibn Sahl al-Ansárí) said, 'I', then the Prophet said, 'Then you get into the grave,' consequently he got down into the grave."

The commentators said about 'committed sin' that the Holy Prophet meant to say 'one who had not had sexual intercourse.' On this occasion the Holy Prophet unveiled the private life of `Uthmán and prevented him from getting down into the grave, although it was a prominent merit of the Prophet's character that he did not disgrace or belittle any one by making public his private life, and despite of knowledge of others' shortcomings, ignored them; but in this case the filth was such that it was deemed necessary to disgrace him before the whole crowd.

Since `Uthmán did not show any regard for the demise of his wife (Umm Kulthúm) nor was he moved or felt sorry (for this event), and paid no heed to the cutting off his relationship with the Holy Prophet (for being his son-in-law), he (`Uthmán) had sexual intercourse on the same night, therefore the Holy Prophet deprived him of this right and honour. (al-Bukhárí, *as-Sahíh*, vol. 2, pp. 100-101, 114; Ahmad ibn Hanbal, *al-Musnad*, vol. 3, pp. 126, 228, 229, 270; al-

hákim, *al-Mustadrak*, vol. 4, p. 47; al-Bayhaqí, *as-Sunan al-kubrá*, vol. 4, p. 53; Ibn Sa`d, *at-Tabaqát al-kabír*, vol. 8, p. 26; as-Suhaylí, *ar-Raw_ al-unuf*, vol. 2, p. 107; Ibn Hajar, *al-Isábah*, vol. 4, p. 489; *Fath al-bárí*, vol. 3, p. 122; al-`Ayní, *`Umdah al-qárí*, vol. 4,p. 85; Ibn al-Athír, *an-Niháyah*, vol. 3, p. 276; Ibn Man~úr, *Lisán al-`Arab*, vol. 9, pp. 280-281; az-Zabídí, *Táj al-`arús*, vol. 6, p. 220).

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SERMON 164

Describing the wonderful creation of the peacock

About the wonderful creation of birds

Alláh has provided wonderful creations including the living, the lifeless, the stationary, and the moving. He has established such clear proofs for His delicate creative power and great might that minds bend down to Him in acknowledgement thereof and in submission to Him, and arguments about His Oneness strike our ears. He has created birds of various shapes which live in the burrows of the earth, in the openings of high passes and on the peaks of mountains.

They have different kinds of wings, and various characteristics. They are controlled by the rein of (Alláh's) authority. They flutter with their wings in the expanse of the vast firmament and the open atmosphere. He brought them into existence from non-existence in strange external shapes, and composed them with joints and bones covered with flesh. He prevented some of them from flying easily in the sky because of their heavy bodies and allowed them to use their wings only close to the ground. He has set them in different colours by his delicate might and exquisite creative power.

Among them are those which are tinted with one hue and there is no other hue except the one in which they have been dyed. There are others which are tinted with one colour, and they have a neck ring of a different colour than that with which they are tinted.

About the Peacock

The most amazing among them in its creation is the peacock, which Alláh has created in the most symmetrical dimensions, and arranged its hues in the best arrangement with wings whose ends are inter-leaved together and whose tail is long. When it moves to its female it spreads out its folded tail and raises it up so as to cast a shade over its head, as if it were the sail of a boat being pulled by the sailor. It feels proud of its colours and swaggers with its movements. It copulates like the cocks. It leaps (on the female) for fecundation like lustful energetic men at the time of fighting.

I am telling you all this from observation, unlike he who narrates on the basis of weak authority, as for example, the belief of some people that it fecundates the female by a tear which flows from its eyes and when it stops on the edges of the eyelids the female swallows it and lays its eggs thereby and not through fecundation by a male other than by means of this flowing tear. Even if they say this, it would be no amazing than (what they say about) the mutual feeding of the crows (for fecundation). You would imagine its feathers to be sticks made of silvers and the wonderful circles and sun-shaped feathers growing thereon to be of pure gold and pieces of green emerald. If you likened them to anything growing on land, you would say that it is a bouquet of flowers collected during every spring. If you likened them to cloths, they would be like printed apparels or amazing variegated cloths of Yemen. If you likened them to ornaments then they would be like gems of different colour with studded silver.

The peacock walks with vanity and pride, and throws open its tail and wings and laughs admiring the handsomeness of its dress and the hues of its necklace of gems. But when it casts its glance at its legs it cries loudly with a voice which indicates its call for help and displays its true grief, because its legs are thin like the legs of Indo-Persian cross-bred cocks. At the end of its shin there is a thin thorn and on the crown of its head there is a bunch of green variegated feathers. Its neck begins in the shape of a goblet and its stretch up to its belly is like the hair-dye of Yemen in colour or like silk cloth put on a polished mirror which looks as if it has been covered with a black veil, except that on account of its excessive lustre and extreme brightness it appears that a lush green colour has been mixed with it. Along the openings of its ears there is a line of shining bright daisy colour like the thin end of a pen. Whiteness shines on the black background. There is hardly a hue from which it has not taken a bit and improved it further by regular polish, lustre, silken brightness and brilliance. It is therefore like scattered blossoms which have not been seasoned by the rains of spring or the sun of the summer.

It also sheds its plumage and puts off its dress. They all fall away and grow again. They fall way from the feather stems like the falling of leaves from twigs, and then they begin to join together and grow till they return to the state that existed before their falling away. The new hues do not change from the previous ones, nor does any colour occur in other than its own place. If you carefully look at one hair from the hairs of its feather stems it would look like red rose, then emerald green and then golden yellow.

How can sharpness of intellect describe such a creation, or faculty of mind, or the utterances of describers manage to tell of it. Even its smallest parts have made it impossible for the imagination to pick them out or for tongues to describe them. Glorified is Alláh who has disabled intellects from describing the creation which He placed openly before the eyes and which they see bounded, shaped, arranged and coloured. He also disabled tongues from briefly describing its qualities and also from expanding in its praise.

The magnificence of the Creator in great and small creation

Glorified is Alláh who has assigned feet to small ants and gnats and also to those above them, the serpents and the elephants. He has made it obligatory upon Himself that no skeleton in which He infuses the spirit would move, but that death is its promised place and destruction its final end.

A part of the same sermon

Describing Paradise

If you cast your mind's eye at what is described to you about Paradise, your heart would begin to hate the delicacies of this world that have been displayed here, namely its desires and its pleasures, and the beauties of its scenes, and you would be lost in the rustling of the trees whose roots lie hidden in the mounds of musk on the banks of the rivers in Paradise and in the attraction of the bunches of fresh pearls in the twigs and branches of those trees, and in the appearance of different fruits from under the cover of their leaves. These fruits can be picked without difficulty as they come down at the desire of their pickers. Pure honey and fermented wine will be handed round to those who settle down in the courtyards of its palaces.

They are a people whom honour has always followed till they were made to settle in the house of eternal abode, and they obtained rest from the movement of journeying. O' listener! If you busy yourself in advancing towards these wonderful scenes which will rush towards you, then your heart will certainly die due to eagerness for them, and you will be prepared to seek the company of those in the graves straight away from my audience here and hasten towards them. Alláh may, by His mercy, include us and you too among those who strive with their hearts for the abodes of the virtuous.

Note explaining some of the wonderful and obscure portions of this sermon

As-Sayyid ar-Radí says: In Amír al-mu'minín's words "*ya'urru bimaláqihihi*", "*al-arr*" implies "copulation", e.g. when it is said "*arra'r-rajulu al-mar'ata ya'urruhá*", it means "He copulated with the woman."

In his *words "ka'annahu qal`u dáriyyin `anajahu nútiyyuhu", "al-qal`"* means the sail of a boat. *"dári"* means belonging to Dárín which is a small town on the coast from where scents are bought. And *"`anajahu"* means "turned it". It is *said "`anajtun'n-náqata* - like *nasartu - a`najuhá `anjan".* "When you turn the she-camel." And *"an-nútí"* means sailor. His *words "daffatay jufúnihi"* means edges of the eyelids, since *"ad-daffatán"* means the two edges. His words *"wa filadhu'z-zabarjadi": "al-filadh"* is the plural of *"al-fildhah"* it means piece. His words *"ka bá'isi'l-lu'lu'i'r-ratibi"*. *"al-kibásah"* means bunch of dates. *"al-`asálíj"* means twigs. Its singular is *"`uslúj"*.

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SERMON 165

Advice for observing courtesy and kindness and keeping in and out of the same

The young among you should follow the elders while the elders should be kind to the young. Do not be like those rude people of the pre-Islamic (*al-jáhiliyyah*) period who did not exert themselves in religion nor use their intellects in the matter of Alláh. They (1) are like the breaking of eggs in the nest of a dangerous bird, because their breaking looks bad, but keeping them intact would mean the production of dangerous young ones.

A part of the same sermon

About the autocracy and oppression of the Umayyads and their fate

They will divide after their unity and scatter away from their centre. Some of them will stick to the branches, and bending down as the branches bend, until Alláh, the Sublime, will collect them together for the day that will be worst for the Umayyads just as the scattered bits of clouds collect together in the autumn. Alláh will create affection among them. Then He will make them into a strong mass like the mass of clouds. Then he will open doors for them to flow out from their starting place like the flood of the two gardens (of Saba') from which neither high rocks remained safe nor small hillocks, and its flow could be repulsed neither by strong mountains nor by high lands. Alláh will scatter them in the low lands of valleys and then He will make them flow like streams throughout the earth, and through them He will arrange the taking of rights of one people by another people and make one people to stay in the houses of another people. By Alláh, all their position and esteem will dissolve as fat dissolves on the fire.

The cause of tyranny

O' people! If you had not evaded support of the truth and had not felt weakness from crushing wrong then he who was not your match would not have aimed at you and he who overpowered you would not have overpowered you. But you roamed about the deserts (of disobedience) like Banú Isrá'íl (Children of Israel). I swear by my life that after me your tribulations will increase several times, because you will have abandoned the truth behind your backs, severed your connection with your near ones and established relations with remote ones. Know that if you had followed him who was calling you (to guidance) he would have made you tread the ways of the Prophet, then you would have been spared the difficulties of misguidance, and you would have thrown away the crushing burden from your necks.

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(1). The implication is that the outer Islam of these people required that they should not be molested, but the consequence of sparing them in this way was that they would create mischief and rebellion.

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SERMON 166

At the beginning of his Caliphate.

Fulfilment of rights and obligations, and advice to fear Alláh in all matters.

Alláh, the Glorified, has sent down a guiding Book wherein He has explained virtue and vice. You should adopt the course of virtue whereby you will have guidance, and keep aloof from the direction of vice so that you remain on the right way. (Mind) the obligations (mind) the obligations. Fulfil them for Alláh and they will take you to Paradise. Surely, Alláh has made unlawful the things which are not unknown and made lawful the things which are without defect. He has declared paying regard to Muslims as the highest of all regards. He has placed the rights of Muslims in the same grade (of importance) as devotion (to Himself and His oneness). Therefore, a Muslim is one from whose tongue and hand every (other) Muslim is safe save in the matter of truth. It is not, therefore, lawful to molest a Muslim except when it is obligatory.

Hasten towards the most common matter which is peculiar to every one; and that is death. Certainly, people (who have already gone) are ahead of you while the hour (Day of Judgement) is driving you from behind. Remain light, in order that you may overtake them. Your backs are being awaited for the sake of the fronts. Fear Alláh in the matter of His creatures and His cities because you will be questioned even about lands and beasts. Obey Alláh and do not disobey Him. When you see virtue adopt it, and when you see vice avoid it.

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SERMON 167

After swearing of allegiance to Amír al-mu'minín, some people from among the companions of the Prophet said to him, "You should punish the people who assaulted `Uthmán," whereupon he said:

O' my brothers! I am not ignorant of what you know, but how do I have the power for it while those who assaulted him are in the height of their power. They have superiority over us, not we over them. They are now in the position that even your slaves have risen with them and Bedouin Arabs too have joined them. They are now among you and are harming you as they like. Do you see any way to be able to do what you aim at?

This demand is certainly that of the pre-Islamic (*al-jáhiliyyah*) period and these people have support behind them. When the matter is taken up, people will have different views about it. One group will think as you do, but another will not think as you think, and there will be still another group who will be neither this way nor that way. Be patient till people quieten down and hearts settle in their places so that rights can be achieved for people easily. Rest assured from me, and see what is given to you by me. Do not do anything which shatters your power, weakens your strength and engenders feebleness and disgrace. I shall control this affair as far as possible, but if I find it necessary the last treatment will, of course, be branding with a hot iron (through fighting).

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SERMON 168

When the people of Jamal set off for Basrah Amír al-mu'minín said:

There is no doubt that Alláh sent down the Prophet as a guide with an eloquent Book and a standing command. No one will be ruined by it except one who ruins himself. Certainly, only doubtful innovations cause ruin except those from which Alláh may protect. In Alláh's authority lies the safety of your affairs. Therefore, render Him such obedience as is neither blameworthy nor insincere. By Alláh, you must do so, otherwise Alláh will take away from you the power of Islam, and will never thereafter return it to you till it reverts to others.

Certainly, these people are in agreement in disliking my authority. I will carry on till I perceive disunity among you; because if, in spite of the unsoundness of their view, they succeed, the whole organisation of the Muslims will be shattered. They are hankering after this world out of jealousy against him on whom Alláh has bestowed it. So they intend reverting the matters on their backs (pre-Islamic period), while on us it is obligatory, for your sake, to abide by the Book of Alláh (Qur'án), the Sublime, and the conduct of the Prophet of Alláh, to stand by His rights and the revival of his *sunnah*.

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SERMON 169

When Amír al-mu'minín approached Basrah an Arab met him and spoke to him,
as he had been sent to him by a group of people of Basrah to enquire from him on their behalf position vis-à-vis the people of Jamal. Amír al-mu'minín explained to him his position with respect to them, from which he was convinced that Amír al-mu'minín was in the right. Then Amír al-mu'minín asked him to swear allegiance, but he replied "I am just a message carrier of a people and shall not do anything until I get back to them." Upon this Amír al-mu'minín said to him:

If those at your back send you as a forerunner to search out a rain-fed area for them, and you return to them and apprise them of greenery and water but they disagree with you and go towards dry and barren land, what would you do then? He said: I would leave them and go towards greenery and water. Amír al-mu'minín then said: So then extend your hand.

This man related that: By Alláh, by such a clear argument I could not refrain from swearing allegiance to Amír al-mu'minín.

This man was know as Kulayb al-Jarmí.

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SERMON 170

When Amír al-mu'minín decided to fight the enemy face to face at Siffín he said:

O' my Alláh! Sustainer of the high sky and the suspended firmament which Thou hast made a shelter for the night and the day, an orbit for the sun and the moon and a path for the rotating stars, and for populating it Thou hast created a group of Thy angels who do not get weary of worshipping Thee. O' Sustainer of this earth which Thou hast made an abode for people and a place for the movement of insects and beasts and countless other creatures seen and unseen. O' Sustainer of strong mountains which Thou hast made as pegs for the earth and (a means of) support for people. If Thou givest us victory over our enemy, save us from excesses and keep us on the straight path of truth. But if Thou givest them victory over us, then grant us martyrdom and save us from mischief.

Where are those who protect honour, and those self-respecting persons who defend respectable persons in the time of hardship? Shame is behind you while Paradise is in front of you.

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SERMON 171

About the Consultative Committee and the Battle of Jamal

Praise be to Alláh from whose view one sky does not conceal another sky nor one earth another earth.

A part of the same sermon
About the Consultative Committee after the death of `Umar ibn al-Khattáb

Someone (1) said to me, "O' son of Abí Tálib, you are eager for the caliphate." Then I told him:

"Rather, you are, by Alláh, more greedy, although more remote, while I am more suited as well as nearer. I have demanded it as my right, while you are intervening between me and it, and you are turning my face from it." When I knocked at his ears with arguments among the crowd of those present he was startled as if he was stunned not knowing what reply to give me about it.

O' my Alláh! I seek Thy succour against the Quraysh and those who are assisting them, because they are denying me (the rights of) kinship, have lowered my high position, and are united in opposing me in the matter (of the caliphate) which is my right, and then they said, "Know that the rightful thing is that you have it and also that you may leave it." (2)

A part of the same sermon

Describing the people of Jamal

They (Talhah, az-Zubayr and their supporters) came out dragging the wife of the Messenger of Alláh (the peace and blessing of Alláh be upon him and his descendants) just as a maidslave is dragged for sale. They took her to Basrah where those two (Talhah and az-Zubayr) put their own women in their houses but exposed the wife of the Messenger of Alláh to themselves and to others in the army in which there was not a single individual who had not offered me his obedience and sworn to me allegiance quite obediently, without any compulsion.

Here in Basrah they approached my governor and treasurers of the public treasury and its other inhabitants. They killed some of them in captivity and others by treachery. By Alláh, even if they had wilfully killed only one individual from among the Muslims without any fault, it would have been lawful for me to kill the whole of this army because they were present in it but did not disagree with it nor prevented it by tongue or hand, not to say that they killed from among the Muslims a number equal to that with which they had marched on them.

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(1). On the occasion of the Consultative Committee Sa`d ibn Abí Waqqás repeated to Amír al-mu'minín what Caliph `Umar had said in his last hours namely that "O' `Alí, you are very greedy for the position of caliphate," and `Alí replied that, "He who demands his own right cannot be called greedy; rather greedy is he who prevents the securing of the right and tries to grab it despite being unfit for it."

There is no doubt that Amír al-mu'minín considered the Caliphate to be his right, and demanded his right. The demand for a right does not dispel a right so that it may be put forth as an excuse for not assigning him the caliphate, and the demand may be held as a mark of greed. Even if it was greed, who was not involved in this greed? Was not the pull between the *muhájirún* and the *ansár* the mutual struggle between the members of the Consultative Committee and the mischief mongering of Talhah and az-Zubayr the product of this very greed. If Amír al-mu'minín had been greedy for this position, he would have stood for it, closing his eyes to the consequences and results, when `Abbás (uncle of the Prophet) and Abú Sufyán pressed him for (accepting) allegiance, and when, after the third Caliph people thronged to him for (swearing) allegiance, he should have accepted their offer without paying any attention to the deteriorated conditions. But at no time did Amír al-mu'minín take any step which could prove that he wanted the Caliphate for the sake of caliphate, but rather his demand for the caliphate was only with the object that its features should not be altered and the religion should not become the victim of others' desires, not that he should enjoy the pleasures of life which could be attributed to greed.

(2). Explaining the meaning, Ibn Abi'l-hadíd writes that Amír al-mu'minín's intention was to say:

> They (the Quraysh and those who are assisting them) were not only content to keep me away from my right over the caliphate which they have usurped (from me), but rather claimed that it was their right whether to give it to me or prevent me from the same; and that I have no right to argue with them.

Furthermore, the intention (of Amír al-mu'minín) is that:

> If they had not said that it is right to keep away from the caliphate, it would have been easy to endure it because this would have, at least, showed their admitting my right although they were not prepared to concede it. (*Sharh Nahj al-balághah*, vol. 9, p. 306)

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SERMON 172

On eligibility for the Caliphate

The Prophet is the trustee of Alláh’s revelation, the Last of His Prophets. the giver of tidings of His mercy and the warner for His chastisement.

O’ people. the most rightful of all persons for this matter (namely the caliphate) is he who is most competent among them to maintain it, and he who knows best Alláh’s commands about it. If any mischief is created by a mischief-monger, he will be called upon to repent. If he refuses. he will be fought. By my life, (1) if the question of Imámah was not to be decided unless all the people were present, then there would be no such case. But those who agreed about it imposed the decision on those who were absent, so much so that he who was present could not dissent and the one who was absent could not choose (any one else). Know that I shall fight two persons - one who claims what is not his and the other who ignores what is obligatory upon him.

The need for sagacity in fighting against Muslims

O’ creatures of Alláh! I advise you to have fear of Alláh because it is the best advice to be mutually given by persons, and the best of all things before Alláh. The door of war has been opened between you and the other Muslims. And this banner will be borne only by him who is a man of sight, of endurance and of knowledge of the position of rightfulness. Therefore, you should go ahead with what you are ordered and desist from what you are refrained. Do not make haste in any matter till you have clarified it. For in the case of every matter which you dislike we have a right to change it.

The behaviour of this world with its adherents

Know that this world which you have started to covet and in which you are interested, and which sometimes enrages you and sometimes pleases you is not your (permanent) abode, nor the place of your stay for which you might have been created, nor one to which you have been invited. Know that it will not last for you nor will you live along with it. If anything out of this world deceives you (into attraction), its evils warn you too. You should give up (the objects of) its deceits in favour of (the objects of) its warning and (the objects of) its attractions in favour of (the objects of) its terrors. And while here in it, advance towards that house to which you have been called, and turn away your hearts from the world. None of you should cry like a maid slave over anything which she has been deprived of. Seek the perfection of Alláh’s bounty over you by endurance in obedience to Alláh and in guarding what He has asked you to guard, namely His Book.

Know that the loss of anything of this world will not harm you, if you have guarded the principles of your religion. Know also that after the loss of your religion nothing of this world for which you have cared will benefit you. May Alláh carry our hearts and your hearts towards the right and may He grant us and you endurance.

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(1). When the people collected in the Saqífah of Banú Sá`idah in connection with the election, even those who were not present there were made to follow the decision taken there, and the principle was adopted that those present at the election had no right to reconsider the matter or to break the allegiance and those not present could do nothing but acquiesce in the agreed decision. But when the people of Medina swore allegiance at the hands of Amír al-mu’minín, the Governor of Syria (Mu`áwiyah) refused to follow suit on the ground that since he was not present on the occasion he was not bound to abide by it, whereupon Amír al-mu’minín gave a reply in this sermon on the basis of these accepted and agreed principles and conditions which had been established among these people and had become incontrovertible namely that: “When the people of Medina and the *ansár* and the *muhájirún* have sworn allegiance on my hand, Mu`áwiyah had no right to keep aloof from it on the ground that he was not present on the occasions nor were Talhah and az-Zubayr entitled to break the pledge after swearing allegiance.”

On this occasion, Amír al-mu’minín did not argue on the strength of any saying of the Prophet which would serve as his final say about the caliphate, because the grounds for refusal in his case was in respect of the *modus operandi* of the principle of election. Therefore, in keeping with the requirements of the situation a reply based on the agreed principles of the adversary could alone quieten him. Even if he had argued on the strength of the Prophet’s command it would have been subjected to various interpretations and the matter would have been prolonged instead

of being settled. Again Amír al-mu'minín had seen that soon after the death of the Prophet all his sayings and commands had been set aside. Therefore, how after the lapse of a long time, could one be expected to accept it when habit had been established to follow one's free will against the Prophet's sayings.

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SERMON 173

About Talhah ibn `Ubaydilláh

Delivered when he received the news that Talhah and az-Zubayr had already left for Basrah to fight against him.

As for me, I would never be frightened of fighting or be made to fear striking because I am satisfied with Alláh's promise of support to me. By Alláh, Talhah has hastened with drawn sword to avenge `Uthmán's blood for fear lest the demand for `Uthmán's blood be made against himself, because the people's idea in this matter is about him, and, in fact, he was the most anxious among them for his killing. Therefore, he has tried to create misunderstanding by collecting forces in order to confuse the matter and to create doubt.

By Alláh. he did not act in either of three ways about `Uthmán. If the son of `Affán (`Uthmán) was in the wrong, as Talhah believed, it is necessary for him to support those who killed (1) him or to keep away from his supporters. If `Uthmán was the victim of oppression. then Talhah should have been among those who were keeping (the assaulters) away from him or were advancing pleas on his behalf. If he was in doubt about these two alternatives, then it was incumbent upon him to leave him (`Uthmán) and retire aside and leave the men with him (to deal with him as they wished). But he adopted none of these three ways, and came out with a thing in which there is no good, and his excuses are not acceptable.

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(1). It means that if Talhah considered `Uthmán an oppressor, then after his assassination, instead of getting ready to avenge his blood, he should have supported his killers and justified their action. It is not the intention that in the case of `Uthmán being in the wrong Talhah should have supported the attackers because he was already supporting and encouraging them.

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SERMON 174

Warning to neglectful people, and about the vastness of his own knowledge

O' people who are (negligent of Alláh but) not neglected (by Alláh), and those who miss (doing good acts) but are to be caught. How is it that I see you becoming removed from Alláh and becoming interested in others? You are like the camel whom the grazer drives to a disease-stricken pasture and a disastrous watering place. They are like beasts who are fed in order to be slaughtered, but they do not know what is intended for them. When they are treated well they think that day to be their whole life, and eating their full to be their aim.

By Alláh, if I wish, I can tell every one of you from where he has come, where he has to go and all his affairs, but I fear lest you abandon the Messenger of Alláh - peace and blessing of Alláh be upon him and his progeny - in my favour. I shall certainly convey these things to the selected ones who will remain safe from that fear. By Alláh, Who deputed the Prophet with Right and distinguished him over creation. I do not speak save the truth. He (the Prophet) informed me of all this and also about the death of every one who dies, the salvation of every one who is granted salvation, and the consequences of this matter (the caliphate). He left nothing (that could) pass into my head without putting it in my ear and telling me about it. (1)

O' people ! By Alláh, I do not impel you to any obedience unless I practise it before you and do not restrain you from any disobedience unless I desist from it before you.

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(1). Those who drink from the springs of revelation and divine inspiration see things hidden behind the curtains of the unknown and the events which will occur in the future in the same way as objects can be seen with the eyes, and this does not conflict with the saying of Alláh that:

Say: "None (either) in the heavens or in the earth knoweth the unseen save Alláh..." (Qur'án, 27:65)

because this verse contains the negation of personal knowledge of the unknown, but not the negation of knowledge which is required by the prophets and holy persons through divine inspiration, by virtue of which they make prophesies about the future and unveil many events and happenings. Several verses of the Qur'án support this view such as:

When the Prophet confided unto one of his wives a matter, but when she divulged it (unto others) and Alláh apprised him thereof, he made known a part of it and avoided a part; so when he informed her of it, said she: "Who informed thee of this?" He said: "Informed me, the All-knowing, the All-aware." (Qur'án, 66:3)

These are of the tidings of the unseen which We reveal unto thee (O' Our Prophet Muhammad)...(Qur'án, 11:49)

Therefore, it is incorrect to argue in support of the view that if it is said that the prophets and holy persons possess knowledge of the unknown it would imply duality in the divine attributes. It would have implied duality if it were said that someone other than Alláh has personal knowledge of the unknown. When it is not so and the knowledge possessed by the Prophets and Imáms is that given by Alláh it has no connection with duality. If duality should mean what is alleged, what would be the position of `Ísá's (Jesus's) assertion related in the Qur'án namely:

. . . Out of clay will I make for you like the figure of a bird, and I will breathe into it, and it shall become a flying bird by Alláh's permission; and I shall heal the blind and the leper and will rise the dead to life by Alláh 's permission; and I will declare to you what ye eat and what ye store up in your houses. . . (Qur'án, 3:49)

If it is believed that `Ísá (Jesus) could create and bestow life with Alláh's permission does it mean that he was Alláh's partner in the attributes of creation and revival? If this is not so then how can it be held that if Alláh gives someone the knowledge of the unknown it implies that he has been taken to be His partner in His attributes, and how can one extol one's belief in the oneness of Alláh by holding that the knowledge of the unknown implies duality.

No one can deny the fact that some people either see in dreams certain things which have yet to occur in the future, or that things can be read through interpretation of the dream, while during a dream neither do the senses

function nor do the powers of understanding and comprehension co-operate. Therefore, if some events become known to some people in wakefulness why should there be amazement over it and what are the grounds for rejecting it, when it stands to reason that things possible in dreams are also possible in wakefulness. Thus, Ibn Maytham al-Bahrání has written that it is possible to achieve all this, because in a dream the spirit becomes free from looking after the body and is removed from bodily connections; as a result of this it perceives such hidden realities which could not be seen because of the obstruction of the body. In the same way those perfect beings who pay no heed to bodily matters, and turn with all the attention of spirit and heart towards the centre of knowledge can see those realities and secrets which the ordinary eyes are unable to discern. Therefore, keeping in view the spiritual greatness of Ahlu'l-bayt (members of the Prophet's family) it should not appear strange that they were aware of events which were going to occur in future. Ibn Khaldún has written:

> "When thaumaturgic feats are performed by others what do you think about those who were distinguished in knowledge and honesty and were a mirror of the Prophet's traits, while the consideration Alláh had for their noble root (namely the Prophet) is a proof of the high performances of his chaste off-shoots (Ahlu'l-bayt). Consequently many events about knowledge of the unknown are related about Ahlu'l-bayt which are not related about others.." (*al-Muqaddamah*, p. 23).

In this way there is no cause for wonder over Amír al-mu'minín's claim since he was brought up by the Prophet and was a pupil of Alláh's school. Of course, those whose knowledge does not extend beyond the limits of physical objectivity and whose means of learning are confined to the bodily senses refuse to believe in the knowledge about the paths of divine cognisance and reality. If this kind of claim were unique and were heard only from over Amír al-mu'minín then minds could have wavered and temperaments could have hesitated in accepting it, but if the Qur'án records even such a claim of `Ísá (Jesus) that - "I can tell you what you eat or drink or store in your houses," then why should there be hesitation over Amír al-mu'minín's claim, when it is agreed that Amír al-mu'minín had succeeded to all the attainments and distinctions of the Prophet and it cannot be contended that the Prophet did not know what `Ísá (Jesus) knew. Thus, if the successor of the Prophet advances such a claim, why should it be rejected, particularly as this vastness of knowledge of Amír al-mu'minín is the best evidence and proof for the Prophet's knowledge and perfection and a living miracle of his truthfulness.

In this connection, it is amazing that even having knowledge of events Amír al-mu'minín did not, through any of his words or deeds, indicate that he knew them. Thus, commenting of the extraordinary importance of this claim, as-Sayyid Ibn Táwús writes:

> "An amazing aspect of this claim is that despite the fact that Amír al-mu'minín was aware of conditions and events, yet he observed such conduct by way of his words and deeds that one who saw him could not believe that he knew the secrets and unknown acts of others, because the wise agree that if a person knows what event is likely to take place or what step his comrade is going to take, or if the hidden secrets of people are known to him, then the effects of such knowledge would appear through his movements and the expressions of his face. But the man who, in spite of knowing everything, behaves in a way as though he is unaware and knows nothing, then his personality is a miracle and a combination of contradictions."

At this stage, the question arises as to why Amír al-mu'minín did not act upon the dictates of his secret knowledge. The reply to this is that the commands of the *sharí`ah* are based on apparent conditions. Otherwise secret knowledge is a kind of miracle and power which Alláh grants to His prophets and Imáms. Although the prophets and Imáms possess this power always, they cannot make use of it at any time unless and until by the permission of Alláh and on the proper occasion. For example, the verse quoted above about `Ísá (Jesus) which tells that he had the power to give life, to heal the blind and declare what one ate and stored in his house, etc., he (Jesus) did not used to practise this power on every thing or every corpse or everyone who met him. He used to practise this power only by the permission of Alláh and on the proper occasion.

If prophets and other divines acted on the basis of their secret knowledge it would have meant serious dislocation and disturbance in the affairs of the people. For example, if a prophet or divine, on the basis of his secret knowledge, punishes a condemnable man by killing him, there would be great commotion and agitation among those who see it on the ground that he killed an innocent man. That is why Alláh has not permitted the basing of conclusions on secret knowledge save in a few special cases, and has enjoined the following of observable factors. Thus, despite his being aware of the hypocrisy of some of the hypocrites, the Prophet extended to them the treatment that should be extended to a Muslim.

Now, there can be no scope for the objection that if Amír al-mu'minín knew secret matters then why did he not act according to them because it has been shown that he was not obliged to act according to the requirements of his secret knowledge. Of course, where conditions so required he did disclose some matters for the purposes of preaching, admonishing, giving good tidings (of reward) or warning (against punishment), so that future events could be fore-closed. For example, Imám Ja`far as-Sádiq (p.b.u.h.) informed Yahyá ibn Zayd that if he went out he would be killed. Ibn Khaldún writes in this connection:

> "It has been authentically related from Imám Ja`far as-Sádiq that he used to apprise some of his relations of the events to befall them. For example, he warned his cousin Yahyá ibn Zayd of being killed but he disobeyed him and went out and was killed in Júzaján." (*al-Muqaddamah*, p. 233).

Nevertheless, where there was apprehension that minds would get worried it was not at all disclosed. That is why in this sermon Amír al-mu'minín avoided more details, in view of the fear that people would begin to regard him higher than the Prophet. Despite all this people did go astray about `Ísá (Jesus), and in the same way about Amír al-mu'minín also they began to say all sorts of things and were misled into resorting to exaggeration.

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SERMON 175

Preaching

(O ‘ creatures!) Seek benefit from the sayings of Alláh, be admonished of Alláh and accept the advice of Alláh because Alláh has left no excuse for you by providing clear guidance, has put before you the plea and clarified for you what acts He likes and what acts He hates, so that you may follow the one and avoid the other. The Prophet of Alláh used to say. “Paradise is surrounded by unpleasant things while Hell is surrounded by desires.”

You should know that every obedience to Alláh is unpleasant in appearance while every disobedience to Alláh has the appearance of enjoyment. Alláh may have mercy on the person who kept aloof from his desire and uprooted the appetite of his heart, because this heart has far-reaching aims and it goes on pursuing disobedience through desires.

You should know, O’ creatures of Alláh, that a believer should be distrustful of his heart every morning and evening. He should always blame it (for shortcomings) and ask it to add to (its good acts). You should behave like those who have gone before you and the precedents in front of you. They left this world like a traveller and covered it as distance is covered.

The greatness of the Holy Qur’án

And know that this Qur’án is an adviser who never deceives, a leader who never misleads and a narrator who never speaks a lie. No one will sit beside this Qur’án but that when he rises he will achieve one addition or one diminution - addition in his guidance or elimination in his (spiritual) blindness. You should also know that no one will need anything after (guidance from) the Qur’án and no one will be free from want before (guidance from) the Qur’án. Therefore, seek cure from it for your ailments and seek its assistance in your distresses. It contains a cure for the biggest diseases, namely unbelief, hypocrisy, revolt and misguidance. Pray to Alláh through it and turn to Alláh with its love. Do not ask the people through it. There is nothing like it through which the people should turn to Alláh, the Sublime.

Know that it is an interceder and its intercession will be accepted. It is a speaker who is testified. For whoever the Qur’án intercedes on the Day of Judgement, its intercession for him would be accepted. He about whom the Qur’án speaks ill on the Day of Judgement shall testify to it. On the Day of Judgement an announcer will announce, “Beware. every sower of a crop is in distress except the sowers of the Qur’án.” Therefore, you should be among the sowers of the Qur’án and its followers. Make it your guide towards Alláh. Seek its advice for yourselves, do not trust your views against it. and regard your desires in the matter of the Qur’án as deceitful.

About the believers and their good deeds; and the hypocrites and their bad deeds

Action! action! Then (look at) the end; the end, and (remain) steadfast; steadfast. Thereafter (exercise) endurance, endurance, and piety, piety. You have an objective. Proceed towards your objective. You have a sign. Take guidance from your sign. Islam has an objective. Proceed towards its objective. Proceed towards Alláh’s by fulfilling His rights which He has enjoined upon you. He has clearly stated His demands for you. I am a witness for you and shall plead excuses on your behalf on the Day of Judgement.

Beware! what had been ordained has occurred and that which had been destined has come into play. I am speaking to you with the promise and pleas of Alláh.

Alláh the Sublime, has said:

> *Verily, those who say: Our Lord is Alláh! and persevere aright, the angels descend upon them* (saying): *“Fear Ye not, nor be grieved, and receive the glad tidings of the Garden which Ye were promised.”* (Qur’án, 41:30)

You have said. “Our Lord is Alláh.” Then keep steadfast to His Book, to the way of His command and to the virtuous course of His worship. Thereafter do not go out of it, do not introduce innovations in it, and do not turn away from it, because those who go away from this course will be cut off from (the mercy of) Alláh on the Day of Judgement.

Beware from destroying your manners and changing them, maintaining one tongue. A man should control his tongue because the tongue is obstinate with its master. By Alláh, I do not find that fear of Alláh benefits a man who practises it unless he controls his tongue. Certainly the tongue of a believer is at the back of his heart while the heart of a hypocrite is at the back of his tongue; because, when a believer intends to say anything, he thinks it over in his mind. If it is good he discloses it, but if it is bad he lets it remain concealed. While a hypocrite speaks whatever comes to his tongue, without knowing what is in his favour and what goes against him.

The Prophet of Alláh - peace and blessing of Alláh be upon him and his descendants - said: "The belief of a person cannot be firm unless his heart is firm, and his heart cannot be firm unless his tongue is firm." So whoever of you can manage to meet Alláh, the Sublime, in such a position that his hands are unsmeared with the blood of Muslims and their property and his tongue is safe from exposing them, he should do so.

Following the sunnah and refraining from innovation

Know, O' creatures of Alláh, that a believer should regard lawful this year what he regarded lawful in the previous year, and should consider unlawful this year what he considered unlawful in the previous year. Certainly people's innovation cannot make lawful for you what has been declared unlawful; rather, lawful is that which Alláh has made lawful and unlawful is that which Alláh has made unlawful. You have already tested the matters and tried them; you have been preached by those before you. Illustrations have been drawn for you and you have been called to clear fact. Only a deaf man can remain deaf to all this, and only a blind man can remain blind to all this.

He whom Alláh does not allow benefit from trials and experience cannot benefit from preaching. He will be faced with losses from in front, so that he will approve what is bad and disapprove what is good. People are of two categories - the follower of the *sharí`ah* (religious laws), and the follower of the innovations to whom Alláh has not given any testimony by way of *sunnah* or the light of any plea.

Guidance from the Holy Qur'án

Alláh the Glorified, has not counselled anyone on the lines of this Qur'án, for it is the strong rope of Alláh and His trustworthy means. It contains the blossoming of the heart and springs of knowledge. For the heart there is no other gloss than the Qur'án although those who remembered it have passed away while those who forgot or pretended to have forgotten it have remained. If you see any good give your support to it, but if you see evil evade it, because the Messenger of Alláh used to say: "O' son of Adam, do good and evade evil; by doing so you will be treading correctly."

Categories of oppression

Know that injustice is of three kinds - one, the injustice that will not be forgiven, another, that will not be left unquestioned, and another that will be forgiven without being questioned. The injustice that will not be forgiven is duality of Alláh. Alláh has said: *Verily Alláh forgiveth not that* (anything) *be associated with Him ...* (Qur'án, 4:48,116). The injustice that will be forgiven is the injustice a man does to himself by committing small sins; and the injustice that will not be left unquestioned is the injustice of men against other men. The retribution in such a case is severe. It is not wounding with knives, nor striking with whips, but it is so severe that all these things are small against it. You should therefore avoid change in the matter of Alláh's religion for your unity in respect of a right which you dislike is better than your scattering away in respect of a wrong that you like. Certainly, Alláh the Glorified has not given any person, whether among the dead or among those who survive, any good from separation.

O' people, blessed is the man whose own shortcomings keep him away from (looking into) the shortcomings of others, and also blessed is the man who is confined to his house, eats his meal, buries himself in obeying his Alláh. and weeps over his sins, so that he is engaged in himself and people are in safety from him.*****

SERMON 176

About the two arbiters (after the battle of Siffín)

Your party had decided to select two persons, and so we took their pledge that they would act according to the Qur'án and would not commit excess, that their tongues should be with it and that their hearts should follow it. But they deviated from it, abandoned what was right although they had it before their eyes. Wrong-doing was their desire, and going astray was their behaviour. Although we had settled with them to decide with justice. to act according to the light and without the interference of their evil views and wrong judgement. Now that they have abandoned the course of right and have come out with just the opposite of what was settled, we have strong ground (to reject their verdict).

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SERMON 177

Praise of Alláh, transience of this world, and causes of the decline of Alláh's blessings. (Delivered at the beginning of his caliphate after the killing of `Uthmán)

One condition does not prevent Him from (getting into) another condition, time does not change Him, place does not locate him and the tongue does not describe Him. The number of drops of water, of stars in the sky, or of currents of winds in the air are not unknown to Him, nor the movements of ants on rocks, or the resting place of grubs in the dark night. He knows the places where leaves fall, and the secret movements of the pupils of the eyes.

I stand witness that there is no god but Alláh, Who has no parallel, Who is not doubted, Whose religion is not denied and Whose creativeness is not questioned. My witnessing is like that of a man whose intention is free, whose conscience is clear, whose belief is pure and whose loads (of good actions) are heavy. I also stand witness that Muhammad - the peace and blessings of Alláh be upon him and his progeny - is His slave and His Messenger, chosen from His creations, selected for detailing His realities, picked for His selected honours and chosen for His esteemed messages. Through him the signs of guidance have been lighted and the gloom of blindness (misguidance) has been dispelled.

O' people, surely this world deceives him who longs for it and who is attracted towards it. It does not behave niggardly with him who aspires for it and overpowers him who overpowers it. By Alláh, no people are deprived of the lively pleasures of life after enjoying them, except as a result of sins committed by them, because certainly Alláh is not unjust to His creatures. Even then, when calamities descend upon people and pleasures depart from them, they turn towards Alláh with true intention and the feeling in their hearts that He will return them everything that has fled from them and cure all their ills.

I fear about you lest you fall into ignorance (that prevailed before the appearance of the Prophet). In the past there were certain matters in which you were deflected, and in my view you were not worthy of admiration; but if your previous position could be returned to you then you would become virtuous. I can only strive; but if I were to speak I would (only) say may Alláh forgive your past actions.

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SERMON 178

Dhi`lib al-Yamání asked Amír al-mu'minín whether he had seen Alláh, when he replied,

"Do I worship one whom I have not seen?" Then he enquired, "How have you seen Him?" Then Amír al-mu'minín replied:

Eyes do not see Him face to face, but hearts perceive Him through the realities of belief. He is near to things but not (physically) contiguous. He is far from them but not (physically) separate. He is a speaker, but not with reflection. He intends, but not with preparation. He moulds, but not with (the assistance of) limbs. He is subtle but cannot be attributed with being concealed. He is great but cannot be attributed with haughtiness. He sees but cannot be attributed with the sense (of sight). He is Merciful but cannot be attributed with weakness of heart. Faces feel low before His greatness and hearts tremble out of fear of Him.

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SERMON 179

Condemning his disobedient men

I praise Alláh for whatever matter He ordained and whatever action He destines and for my trial with you, O' group of people who do not obey when I order and do not respond when I call you. If you are at ease you engage in (conceited) conversation, but if you are faced with battle you show weakness. If people agree on one Imám you taunt each other. If you are faced with an arduous matter you turn away from it. May others have no father (woe to your enemy!) what are you waiting for in the matter of your assistance and for fighting for your rights? For you there is either death or disgrace. By Alláh, if my day (of death) comes. and it is sure to come, it will cause separation between me and you although I am sick of your company and feel lonely with you.

May Alláh deal with you! Is there no religion which may unite you nor sense of shamefulness that may sharpen you? Is it not strange that Mu`áwiyah calls out to some rude low people and they follow him without any support or grant, but when I call you, although you are the successors of Islam and the (worthy) survivors of the people, with support and distributed grants you scatter away from me and oppose me? Truly, there is nothing between me to you which I like and you also like it, or with which I am angry and you may also unite against it. What I love most is death. I have taught you the Qur'án, clarified to you arguments, apprised you of what you were ignorant and made you swallow what you were spitting out. Even a blind man would have been able to see, and he who was sleeping would have been awakened. How ignorant of Alláh is their leader Mu`áwiyah and their instructor Ibn an-Nábighah. (1)

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(1). "an-Nábighah" is the surname of Layla bint Harmalah al-`Anaziyyah, mother of `Amr ibn al-`ÁS. The reason for attributing him to his mother is her common reputation in the matter. When Arwá bint al-hárith ibn `Abd al-Muttalib went to Mu`áwiyah, during the conversation, when `Amr ibn al-`ÁS intervened, she said to him: "O' son of an-Nábighah, you too dare speak, although your mother was known publicly and was a singer of Mecca. That is why five persons claimed you (as a son), and when she was asked she admitted that five people had visited her and that you should be regarded as the son of him you resembled most. You must have resembled al-`ÁS ibn Wá'il and therefore you came to be known as his son."

These five persons were (1) al-`ÁS ibn Wa'il, (2) Abú Lahab, (3) Umayyah ibn Khalaf, (4) Hishám ibn al-Mughirah, and (5) Abú Sufyan ibn Harb. (Ibn `Abd Rabbih, *al-`Iqd al-faríd*, vol. 2, p. 120; Ibn Tayfúr, *Balághát an-nisá'*, p. 27; Ibn Hijjah, *Thamarát al-awráq*, vol. 1, p. 132; Safwat, *Jamharat khutab al-`Arab*, vol. 2, p.363; Ibn Abi'l-hadíd, vol. 6, pp. 283-285, 291; al-halabí, *as-Sírah* vol. 1, p. 46).

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SERMON 180

Amír al-mu'minín sent one of his men to bring him news about a group of the army of Kúfah who had decided to join the Khárijites but were afraid of him.

(1) **When the man came back Amír al-mu'minín said to him: "Are they satisfied and staying or feeling weak and going astray?" The man replied, "They have gone away, O' Amír al-mu'minín."**

Then Amír al-mu'minín said:

May Alláh's mercy remain away from them as in the case of Thamúd. Know that when the spears are hurled towards them and the swords are struck at their heads they will repent of their doings. Surely today Satan has scattered them and tomorrow he will disclaim any connection with them, and will leave them. Their departing from guidance, returning to misguidance and blindness, turning away from truth and falling into wrong is enough (for their chastisement).

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(1). A man of the tribe Banú Nájiyah named al-Khirrít ibn Ráshid an-Nájí was on Amír al-mu'minín's side in the battle of Siffín, but after Arbitration he became rebellious, and, coming to Amír al-mu'minín with thirty persons, said: "By Alláh, I Will no more obey your command, nor offer prayers behind you, and shall leave you tomorrow." Whereupon Amír al-mu'minín said: "You should first take into account the grounds underlying this Arbitration and discuss it with me. If you are satisfied, you do as you will." He said he would come the next day to discuss the matter. Amír al-mu'minín then cautioned him, "Look, on going from here do not get mislead by others and do not adopt any other course. If you have the will to understand, I will get you out of this wrong path and put you on the course of guidance." After this conversation he went away, but his countenance indicated he was bent on revolt, and would not see reason by any means. And so it happened. He stuck to his point and on reaching his place he said to his tribesmen, "When we are determined to abandon Amír al-mu'minín there is no use going to him. We should do what we have decided to do." On this occasion `Abdulláh ibn Qu`ayn al Azdí also went to them to enquire, but when he came to know the position he asked Mudrik ibn ar-Rayyán an-Nájí to speak to him and to apprise him of the ruinous consequence of this rebellion, whereupon Mudrik assured him that this man would not be allowed to take any step. Consequently, `Abdulláh came back satisfied and related the whole matter before Amír al-mu'minín on returning the next day. Amír al-mu'minín said, "Let us see what happens when he comes. " But when the appointed hour passed and he did not turn up Amír al-mu'minín asked `Abdulláh to go and see what the matter was and what was the cause for the delay. On reaching there `Abdulláh found that all of them had left. When he returned to Amír al-mu'minín he spoke as in this sermon.

The fate that befell al-Khirrít ibn Ráshid an-Nájí has been stated under Sermon 44.

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SERMON 181

It has been related by Nawf al-Bikálí that Amír al-mu'minín `Alí (p.b.u.h.) delivered this sermon at Kúfah standing on a stone which Ja`dah ibn Hubayrah al-Makhzúmí had placed for him.

Amír al-mu'minín had a woollen apparel on his body, the belt of his sword was made of leaves, and the sandals on his feet too were of palm leaves. His forehead had a hardened spot like that a camel (on its knee, due to many and long prostrations). About Alláh's attributes, His creatures and His being above physical limitations

Praise be to Alláh to Whom is the return of all creation and the end of all matters. We render Him praise for the greatness of His generosity, the charity of His proofs, the increase of His bounty and His favours, - praise which may fulfil His right, repay His thanks, take (us) near His reward and be productive of increase in His kindness. We seek His help like one who is hopeful of His bounty, desirous of His benefit, and confident of His warding off (calamities), who acknowledges His gifts and is obedient to Him in word and deed. We believe in Him like him who reposes hope in Him with conviction, inclines to Him as a believer, humbles himself before Him obediently, believes in His oneness exclusively, regards Him great, acknowledging His dignity, and seeks refuge with Him with inclination and exertion.

Alláh the Glorified has not been born so that someone could be (His) partner in glory. Nor has He begotten anyone so as to be inherited from after dying. Time and period have not preceded Him. Increase and decrease do not occur to Him. But He has manifested Himself to our understanding through our having observed His strong control and firm decree. Among the proofs of His creation is the creation of the skies which are fastened without pillars and stand without support. He called them and they responded obediently and humbly without being lazy or loathsome. If they had not acknowledged His Godhead and obeyed Him He would not have made them the place for His throne, the abode of His angels and the destination for the rising up of the pure utterances and the righteous deeds of the creatures.

He has made the stars in the skies by way of signs by which travellers wandering the various routes of the earth may be guided. The gloom of the dark curtains of the night does not prevent the flame of their light, nor do the veils of blackish nights have the power to turn back the light of the moon when it spreads in the skies. Glory be to Alláh from Whom neither the blackness of dark dusk or of gloomy night (falling) in the low parts of the earth or on high dim mountains is hidden, nor the thundering of clouds on the horizons of the skies, nor the sparking of lightning in the clouds, nor the falling of leaves blown away from their falling places by the winds of hurricanes or by downpour from the sky. He knows where the drops fall and where they stay, where the grubs leave their trails or where they drag themselves, what livelihood would suffice the mosquitoes and what a female bears in its womb.

Praise be to Alláh Who exists from before the coming into existence of the seat, the throne, the sky, the earth, the jinn or human being. He cannot be perceived by imagination nor measured by understanding. He who begs from Him does not divert Him (from others), nor does giving away cause Him diminution. He does not see by means of an eye, nor can He be confined to a place. He cannot be said to have companions. He does not create with (the help of) limbs. He cannot be perceived by senses. He cannot be thought of after the people.

It is He who spoke to Músá clearly and showed him His great signs without the use of bodily parts, the organ of speech or the uvula. O' you who exert yourself in describing Alláh if you are serious then (first try to) describe Gabriel, Michael or the host of angels who are close (to Alláh) in the receptacles of sublimity; but their heads are bent downwards and their wits are perplexed as to how to assign limits (of definition) to the Highest Creator. This is because those things can only be perceived through qualities which have shape and parts and which succumb to death after reaching the end of their times. There is no god but He. He has lighted every darkness with His effulgence and has darkened every light with the darkness (of death).

An account of past peoples and about learning from them

I advise you, creatures of Alláh, to practise fear of Alláh Who gave you good clothing and bestowed an abundance of sustenance on you. If there was anyone who could secure a ladder to everlasting life or a way to avoid death it was Sulaymán ibn Dáwúd (p. b. u. h.) who was given control over the domain of the jinn and men along with prophethood and great position (before Alláh), but when he finished what was his due in food (of this world) and exhausted his (fixed) time the bow of destruction shot him with arrow of death. His houses became vacant and his

habitations became empty. Another group of people inherited them. Certainly, the by-gone centuries have a lesson for you.

Where are the Amalekites (1) and the sons of Amalekites? Where are the Pharaohs? (2) Where are the people of the cities of ar-Rass (3) who killed the prophets, destroyed the traditions of the divine messengers and revived the traditions of the despots? Where are those who advanced with armies, defeated thousands, mobilised forces and populated cities?

A part of the same sermon about the Imám al-Mahdí

He will be wearing the armour of wisdom, which he will have secured with all its conditions, such as full attention towards it, its (complete) knowledge and exclusive devotion to it. For him it is like a thing which he had lost and which he was then seeking, or a need which he was trying to fulfil. If Islam is in trouble he will feel forlorn like a traveller and like a (tired) camel beating the end of its tail and with its neck flattened on the ground. He is the last of Alláh's proofs and one of the vicegerents of His prophets.

Then Amír al-mu'minín continued:

On the method of his ruling, and grief over the martyrdom of his companions

O' people! I have divulged to you advice which the prophets used to preach before their peoples, and I have conveyed to you what the vicegerents (of the prophets) conveyed to those coming after them. I tried to train you with my whip but you could not be straightened. I drove you with admonition but you did not acquire proper behaviour. May Alláh deal with you! Do you want an Imám other than me to take you on the (right) path, and show you the correct way?

Beware, the things in this world which were forward have become things of the past, and those of which were behind are going ahead. The virtuous people of Alláh have made up their minds to leave and they have purchased, with a little perishable (pleasure) of this world, a lot of such (reward) in the next world that will remain. What loss did our brothers whose blood was shed in Siffín suffer by not being alive today? Only that they are not suffering choking on swallowings and not drinking turbid water. By Alláh, surely they have met Alláh and He has bestowed upon them their rewards and He has lodged them in safe houses after their (having suffered) fear.

Where are my brethren who took the (right) path and trod in rightness. Where is `Ammár? (4) Where is Ibn at-Tayyihán? (5) Where is Dhu'sh-Shahádatayn? (6) And where are others like them (7) from among their comrades who had pledged themselves to death and whose (severed) heads were taken to the wicked enemy.

Then Amír al-mu'minín wiped his hand over his auspicious, honoured beard and wept for a long time, then he continued:

Oh! my brothers. who recited the Qur'án and strengthened it, thought over their obligation and fulfilled it, revived the *sunnah* and destroyed innovation. When they were called to *jihád* they responded and trusted in their leader then followed him.

Then Amír al-mu'minín shouted at the top of his voice:

al-jihád, al-jihád (fighting, fighting), O' creatures of Alláh! By Alláh, I am mobilising the army today. He who desires to proceed towards Alláh should come forward.

Nawf says: Then Amír al-mu'minín put Husayn (p.b.u.h.) over (a force of) ten thousand, Qays ibn Sa`d (mercy of Alláh be upon him) over ten thousand, Abú Ayyúb al-Ansárí over ten thousand, and others over different numbers, intending to return to Siffín, but Friday did not appear again and the accursed Ibn Muljam (may Alláh curse him) killed him. Consequently, the armies came back and were left like sheep who had lost their shepherd while wolves were snatching them away from all sides.

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(1). History shows that very often the ruin and destruction of peoples has been due to their oppression and open wickedness and profligacy. Consequently, communities which had extended their sway over all the corners of the populated world and had flown their flags in the East and West of the globe disappeared from the surface of the earth like a wrong word, on disclosure of their vicious actions and evil doings.

Amalekites: ancient nomadic tribe, or collection of tribes, described in the Old Testament as relentless enemies of Israel, even though they were closely related to Ephraim, one of the twelve tribes of Israel. Their name derives from Amalek, who is celebrated in Arabian tradition but cannot be identified. The district over which they ranged was south of Judah and probably extended into northern Arabia. The Amalekites harassed the Hebrews during their exodus out of Egypt and attacked them at Rephidim (near Mt. Sinai), where they were defeated by Joshua. They also filled out the ranks of the nomadic raiders defeated by Gideon and were condemned to annihilation by Samuel. The Amelekites, whose final defeat occurred in the time of Hezekiah, were the object of a perpetual curse. (*The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* [Micropaedia], vol. 1, p. 288, ed. 1973-1974; also see [for further reference] *The Encyclopaedia Americana,* [International Edition] vol. 1, p. 651, ed. 1975).

(2). **Pharaoh:** Hebrew form of the Egyptian per-`o ("the great house"), signifying the royal palace, an epithet applied in the New Kingdom and after, as a title of respect, to the Egyptian king himself. In the 22nd dynasty the title was added to the king's personal name. In official documents the full titulary of the Egyptian king contained five names. The first and oldest identified him as the incarnation of the falcon god, Horus; it was often written inside a square called *serekh*, depicting the facade of the archaic palace. The second name, "two ladies", placed him under the protection of Nekhbet and Buto, the vulture and uraeus (snake) goddesses of Upper and Lower Egypt; the third, "golden Horus", signified perhaps originally "Horus victorious over his enemies." The last two names, written within a ring or cartouche, are generally referred to as the praenomen and nomen, and were the ones most commonly used; the praenomen and nomen, and were the ones most commonly used; the praenomen, preceded by the hieroglyph meaning "King of Upper and Lower Egypt," usually contained a reference to the king's Unique relationship with the sun god, Re, while the fifth, or nomen, was preceded by the hieroglyph for "Son of Re," or by that for "Lord of the two lands." The last name was given him at birth, the rest at his coronation. (*The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* [Micropaedia], vol. Vll, p. 927, ed. 1973-1974; also see [for further reference] *The Encyclopaedia Americana,* [International Edition], vol. 21, p. 707, ed. 1975).

Among the Pharaohs was the Pharaoh of the days of Prophet Músá. His pride, egotism, insolence and haughtiness were such that by making the claim "I am your sublime God" he deemed himself to be holding sway over all other powers of the world, and was under the misunderstanding that no power could wrest the realm and government from his hands. The Qur'án has narrated his claim of "I and no one else" in the following words:

> *And proclaimed Pharaoh unto his people, "O' my people! is not the kingdom of Egypt mine? And these rivers flow below me; What! behold ye not?* (43:51)

But when his empire came near the end it was destroyed in a few moments. Neither his position and servants could come in the way of its destruction nor could the vastness of his realm prevent it. Rather, the waves of the very streams which he was extremely proud to possess, wrapped him in and dispatched his spirit to Hell throwing the body on the bank to serve as a lesson for the whole of creation.

(3). **The people of the cities of ar-Rass:** In the same way the people of ar-Rass were killed and destroyed for disregarding the preaching and call of a prophet, and for revolt and disobedience. About them the Qur'án says:

> *And the* (tribes of) *`Ád and Thamúd and the inhabitants of ar-Rass, and generations between them, in great number. And unto each of them We did give examples and every one* (of them) *We did destroy with utter extermination.* (25:38,39)

> *Belied* (also) *those before them the people of Noah and the dwellers of ar-Rass and Thamúd; And `Ád and Pharaoh, and the brethren of Lot; And the dwellers of the Wood and the people of Tubba`; all belied the apostles, so was proved true My promise* (of the doom) (50:12-14)

(4). `Ammár ibn Yásir ibn `Ámir al-`Ansí al-Madhhijí al Makhzúmí (a confederate of Banú Makhzúm) was one of the earliest converts to Islam, and the first Muslim to build a mosque in his own house in which he used to worship Alláh (*at-Tabaqát*, vol. 3, Part 1, p. 178; *Usd al-ghábah*, vol. 4, p. 46; Ibn Kathír, *at-Táríkh,* vol. 7, p. 311).

`Ammár accepted Islam along with his father Yásir and his mother Sumayyah. They suffered great tortures by the Quraysh, due to their conversion to Islam, to such an extent that `Ammár lost his parents; and they were the first martyrs man and woman in Islam.

`Ammár was among those who immigrated to Abyssinia, and the earliest immigrants (muhájirún) to Medina. He was present in the battle of Badr and all other battles as well as places of assembly by the Muslims during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet; and he showed his might and favour in all Islamic struggles in the best way.

Many traditions are narrated from the Holy Prophet about `Ammár regarding his virtues, outstanding traits and his glorious deeds, such as the tradition which `Á'ishah and other have narrated that the Holy Prophet himself had said that `Ammár was filled with faith from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet. (Ibn Májah, *as-Sunan*, vol. 1, p. 65; Abu Nu`aym, H*ilyah al-Awliyá'*, vol. 1, p. 139; al-Haytamí, *Majma` az-zawá'id*, vol. 9, p. 295*; al-Istí`áb*, vol. 3, p. 1137; *al-Isábah,* vol. 2, p. 512)

In another tradition the Holy Prophet said about `Ammár:

> `Ammár is with the truth and the truth is with `Ammár. He turns wherever the truth turns. `Ammár is as near to me as an eye is near to the nose. Alas! a rebellious group will kill him. (*at-Tabaqát,* vol. 3, part 1, p. 187; *al-Mustadrak,* vol. 3, p. 392; Ibn Hishám, *as-Sírah,* vol. 2, p. 143; Ibn Kathír, *at-Tárikh,* vol. 7, pp. 268-270)

Also in the decisive and widely known tradition which al-Bukhárí (in *Sahíh,* vol. 8, pp. 185-186), at-Tirmidhí (*in al-Jámi` as-Sahíh,* vol. 5, p. 669); Ahmad ibn Hanbal (in *al-Musnad,* vol. 2, pp. 161,164,206; vol. 3, pp.5, 22, 28, 91; vol. 4, pp.197, 199, vol. 5 pp.215, 306, 307; vol. 6, pp.289, 300, 311, 315), and all the narrators of Islamic traditions and historians transmitted through twenty-five Companions that the Holy Prophet said about `Ammár:

> Alas! a rebellious group which swerves from the truth will murder `Ammár. `Ammár will be calling them towards Paradise and they will be calling him towards Hell. His killer and those who strip him of arms and clothing will be in Hell.

Ibn Hajar al-`Asqalání (in *Tahdhíb at-tahdhíb,* vol. 7, p. 409; *al-lsábah,* vol. 2, p.512) and as-Suyútí (*in al-Khasá'is al-kubrá,* vol. 2, p. 140) say: "The narration of this (above mentioned) tradition is *mutawátir* (i.e. narrated successively by so many people that no doubt can be entertained about its authenticity)."

Ibn `Abd al-Barr (in *al-Istí`áb,* vol. 3, p. 1140) says:

> The narration followed uninterrupted succession from the Holy Prophet, that he said: "A rebellious group will murder `Ammár," and this is a prophecy of the Prophet's secret knowledge and the sign of his prophethood. This tradition is among the most authentic and the most rightly ascribed traditions.

After the death of the Holy Prophet, `Ammár was one of the closest adherents and best supporters of Amír al-mu'minín during the reign of the first three Caliphs. During the caliphate of `Uthmán when the Muslim protested (to `Uthmán) against his policy on the distribution of the Public Treasury *(Baytu'l-mál)* `Uthmán said in a public assembly that, 'the money which as in the treasury was sacred and belonged to Alláh, and that he (as being the successor of the Prophet) had the right to dispose of them as he thought fit. 'He (`Uthmán) threatened and cursed all who presumed to censure or murmur at what he said. Upon this, `Ammár ibn Yásir boldly declared his disapprobation and began to charge him with his inveterate propensity to ignore the interests of the general public; accused him with reviving the heathenish customs abolished by the Prophet. Whereupon `Uthmán commanded him to be beaten and immediately some of the Umayyads, the kindred of the Caliph fell upon the venerable `Ammár, and the Caliph himself kicking him with his shoes (on his feet) on `Ammár's testicles, and afflicted him with hernia. `Ammár became unconscious for three days, and he was taken care of by Umm al-mu'minín Umm Salamah in her own house. (al-Baládhurí, *Ansáb al-ashráf,* vol. 5, pp. 48,54,88; Ibn Abi'l-hadíd, vol. 3, pp. 47-52; *al-lmámah wa's-siyásah,* vol. 1, pp. 35-36; *al-`Iqd al-faríd,* vol. 4, p. 307; *at-Tabaqát,* vol. 3, Part 1, p. 185; *Táríkh al-khamís,* vol. 2, p. 271)

When Amír al-mu'minín became Caliph, `Ammár was one of his most sincere supporters. He participated fully in all social, political and military activities during this period, especially in the first battle (the battle of Jamal) and the second one (the battle of Siffín).

However, `Ammár was martyred on 9th Safar 37 A.H. in the battle of Siffín when a he was over ninety years of age. On the day `Ammár ibn Yásir achieved martyrdom, he turned his face to the sky and said:

O’ my Alláh! surely Thou art aware that if I know that Thy wish is that I should plunge myself into this River (the Euphrates) and be drowned, I will do it. O’ my Alláh! surely Thou knowest that if I knew that Thou would be pleased if I put my scimitar on my chest (to hit my heart) and pressed it so hard that it came out of my back, I would do it. O’ my Alláh! I do not think there is anything more pleasant to Thee than fighting with this sinful group, and if knew that any action were more pleasant to Thee I would do it.

Abú `Abd ar-Rahmán as-Sulami narrates:

“We were present with Amír al-mu’minín at Siffín where I saw `Ammár ibn Yásir was not turning his face towards any side, nor valleys (wádis [of the land] ) of Siffín but the companions of the Holy Prophet were following him as if he was a sign for them. Then I heard `Ammár say to Háshim ibn ‘Utbah (al-Mirqál): ‘O’ Háshim! rush into enemy’s ranks, paradise is under sword!

Today I meet beloved one, Muhammad and his party’.

“Then he said: ‘By Alláh, if they put us to flight (and pursue us) to the date-palms of Hajar (a town in Bahrain, Persian Gulf [i.e., if they pursue us along all the Arabian desert] nevertheless) we know surely that we are right and they are wrong.’

“Then he (Ammár) continued (addressing the enemies):

We struck you to (believe in) *its* (Holy Qur’án) *revelation; And today we strike you to (believe in) its interpretation; Such strike as to remove heads from their resting places; And to make the friend forget his sincere friend; Until the truth returns to its* (right) *path.’“*

The narrator says: “I did not see the Holy Prophet’s companions killed at any time as many as they were killed on this day.”

Then `Ammár spurred his horse, entered the battlefield and began fighting. He persistently chased the enemy, made attack after attack, and raised challenging slogans till at last a group of mean-spirited Syrians surrounded him on all sides, and a man named Abú al-Ghádiyah al-Juharí (al-Fazárí) inflicted such a wound upon him that he could not bear it, and returned to his camp. He asked for water. A tumbler of milk was brought to him. When `Ammár looked at the tumbler he said: “The Messenger of Alláh had said the right thing.” People asked him what he meant by these words. He said “The Messenger of Alláh informed me that the last sustenance for me in this world would be milk.” Then he took that tumbler of milk in his hands, drank the milk and surrendered his life to Alláh, the Almighty. When Amír al-mu’minín came to know of his death, he came to `Ammár’s side, put his (`Ammár’s) head on his own lap, and recited the following elegy to mourn his death:

Surely any Muslim who is not distressed at the murder of the son of Yásir, and is not be afflicted by this grievous misfortune does not have true faith.

May Alláh show His mercy to `Ammár the day he embraced Islam, may Alláh show His mercy to `Ammár the day he was killed, and may Alláh show His mercy to `Ammár the day he is raised to life.

Certainly, I found `Ammár (on such level) that three companions of the Holy Prophet could not be named unless he was the fourth, and four of them could not be mentioned unless he was the fifth.

There was none among the Holy Prophet’s companions who doubted that not only was Paradise once or twice compulsorily bestowed upon `Ammár, but that he gained his claim to it (a number of times). May Paradise give enjoyment to `Ammár.

Certainly, it was said (by the Holy Prophet) “Surely, `Ammár is with the truth and the truth is with `Ammár. He turns wherever the truth turns. His killer will be in hell.”

Then Amír al-mu’minín stepped forward and offered funeral prayers for him, and then with his own hands, he buried him with his clothes.

`Ammár's death caused a good deal of commotion in the ranks of Mu`áwiyah too, because there were a large number of prominent people fighting from his side under the impression created in their minds that he was fighting Amír al-mu'minín for a right cause. These people were aware of the saying of the Holy Prophet that `Ammár would be killed by a group who would be on the wrong side. When they observed that `Ammár had been killed by Mu`áwiyah's army, they became convinced that they were on the wrong side and that Amír al-mu'minín was definitely on the right. This agitation thus caused among the leaders as well as the rank and file of Mu`áwiyah's army, was quelled by him with the argument that it was Amír al-mu'minín who brought `Ammár to the battlefield and therefore it was he who was responsible for his death. When Mu`áwiyah's argument was mentioned before Amír al-mu'minín he said it was as though the Prophet was responsible for killing Hamzah as he brought him to the battle of Uhud. (at-Tabarí, *at-Tárikh,* vol. 1, pp. 3316-3322; vol. 3, pp. 2314-2319; Ibn Sa`d, *at-Tabaqát,* vol. 3, Part 1, pp. 176-189; Ibn al-Athír, *al-Kámil,* vol. 3, pp. 308-312; Ibn Kathír, *at-Tárikh,* vol. 7, pp, 267-272; al-Minqarí, *Siffín,* pp. 320-345; Ibn `Abd al-Barr, *al-Istí'áb,* vol . 3, pp. 1135- 1140; vol. 4, p. 1725; Ibn al-Athír, *Usd al-ghábah,* vol. 4, pp. 43-47; vol. 5, p. 267; Ibn Abi'l-hádíd, *Sharh Nahj al-balághah,* vol. 5, pp. 252-258; vol. 8, pp. 10-28; vol. 10, pp. 102-107, al-hákim, *al-Mustadrak,* vol. 3, pp. 384-394; Ibn `Abd Rabbih, *al-`Iqd al-faríd,* vol. 4, pp. 340-343; al-Mas`údí, *Murúj adh-dhahab,* vol. 2, pp. 381-382, al-Haytamí, *Majma` az-zawá'id,* vol. 7, pp. 238-244; vol. 9, pp. 291-298; al-Baládhurí, *Ansáb al-ashráf* (Biography of Amír al-mu'minín), pp. 310-319.

(5). Abu'l-Haytham (Málik) ibn at-Tayyihán al-Ansárí was one of the twelve chiefs (naqíb [of ansár]) who attended the fair and met at al-`Aqabah -- in the first `Aqabah and among those who attended in the second `Aqabah -- where he gave the Holy Prophet the 'pledge of Islam'. He was present in the battle of Badr and all other battles as well as places of assembly by the Muslims during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet. He was also among the sincere supporters of Amír al-mu'minín and he attended the battle of Jamal as well as Siffín where he was martyred. (*al-Istí`áb,* vol. 4, p. 1773; *Siffín,* p. 365; *Usd al-ghábah,* vol. 4, p. 274; vol. 5, p. 318; *al-Isábah,* vol. 3, p. 341; vol. 4, pp. 312-313*; Ibn Abi'l-hadíd,* vol. 10, pp. 107-108; *Ansáb al-ashráf,* p. 319).

(6). Khuzaymah ibn Thábit al-Ansárí. He is known as Dhu'sh-Sháhadatayn because the Holy Prophet considered his evidence equivalent to the evidence of two witnesses He was present in the battle of Badr, and other battles as well as in the places of assembly of the Muslims during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet. He is counted among the earliest of those who showed their adherence to Amír al-mu'minín and he was also present in the battle of Jamal and Siffín. `Abd ar-Rahmán ibn Abí Laylá narrated that he saw a man in the battle of Siffín fighting the enemy valiantly and when he protested against his action, the man said:

> I am Khuzaymah ibn Thábit al-Ansárí, I have heard the Holy Prophet saying "Fight, fight, by the side of `Alí." (al-Khatíb al-Baghdádí, *Muwa__ih awhám al-jam` wa't-tafríq,* vol. 1, p. 277).

Khuzaymah was martyred in the battle of Siffín soon after the martyrdom of `Ammár ibn Yásir.

Sayf ibn `Umar al-Usayydí (the well known liar) has fabricated another Khuzaymah, and claimed that the one who was martyred in the battle of Siffín was this one and not the one with the surname of 'Dhu'sh-Shahádatayn'. at-Tabarí has quoted this fabricated story from Sayf either intentionally or otherwise, and through him this story has affected some other historians who quoted from at-Tabarí or relied on him. (For further reference, see al-`Askarí, *Khamsún wa miah Sahábí mukhtalaq* [one hundred and fifty fabricated companions], vol. 2, pp. 175-189).

After having denied this story Ibn Abi'l-hadíd adds (in *Sharh Nahj al-balághah,* vol. 10, pp. 109-110) that:

Furthermore, what is the need for those who to defend Amír al-mu'minín to make a boast of abundance with Khuzaymah, Abu'l-Haytham, `Ammár and others. If people treat this man (Amír al-mu'minín) with justice and look at him with healthy eyes they will certainly realise that should he be alone (on one side) and the people all together (on the other side) fighting him, he will be in the truth and all the rest will be in the wrong. (*at-Tabaqát,* vol. 3, Part 1, pp. 185,188; *al-Mustadrak,* vol. 3, pp. 385, 397; *Usd al-ghábah,* vol. 2, p. 114; vol. 4, p. 47; *al-lstí`áb,* vol. 2, p. 448; *at-Tabarí,* vol. 3, pp.2316, 2319, 2401; *al-Kámil,* vol. 3, p. 325; *Siffín,* pp. 363, 398; *Ansáb al-ashráf,* pp. 313-314).

(7). Among the people who were present in the battle of Jamal on the side of Amír al-muminín there were one hundred and thirty Badries (those who participated in the battle of Badr with the Holy Prophet) and seven hundred of those who were present in the 'pledge of ar-Ri_wán' (*Bay`atu'r-Ri_wán*) which took place under a tree. (adh-Dhahabí, *Táríkh al-lslám*, vol. 2, p. 171; Khalífah ibn Khayyát, *at-Táríkh* vol. 1, p. 164). Those who were killed in the battle of Jamal from the side of Amír al-muminín numbered some five hundred (some said that the number of martyrs were more than that). But on the side of the people of Jamal twenty thousand were killed. (*al-`lqd al-faríd*, vol. 4, p. 326).

Among those who were present in the battle of Siffín on the side of Amír al-mu’minín, there were eighty Badries and eight hundred of those who gave the Holy Prophet the ‘pledge of ar-Ri_wán.’ (*al-Mustadrak*, vol. 3, p. 104 *al-Istí`á’b*, vol. 3, p. 1138; *al-Isábah*, vol. 2, p. 389; *at-Táríkh*, al-Ya`qúbí, vol. 2, p. 188).

On the side of Mu`áwiyah forty-five thousand were killed, and on the side of Amír al-muminín twenty-five thousand. Among these martyrs (of Amír al-mu’minín) there were twenty-five or twenty-six Badries and sixty-three or three hundred and three of the people of the ‘pledge of ar-Ri_wán’. (Siffín, p. 558; *al-Istí`áb*, vol. 2, p. 389, *Ansáb al-ashráf*, p. 322; Ibn Abi’l-hadíd, vol. 10, p. 104; Abu’l-Fida’ vol. 1, p. 175, Ibn al-Wardí*, at-Táríkh*, vol. 1, p. 240; Ibn Kathír, vol. 7, p. 275*; Táríkh al-khamís*, vol. 2, p. 277)

Besides the distinguished and eminent companions of Amír al-mu’minín like `Ammár, Dhu’sh-Shahádatayn and Ibn al-Tayyihán, who lay martyred in Siffín were:--

i. Háshim ibn `Utbah ibn Abí Waqqás al-Mirqál was killed on the same day when `Ammár was martyred. He was the bearer of the standard of Amír al-mu’minín’s army on that day.

ii. Abdulláh ibn Budayl ibn al-Warqá’ al-Khuzá`í was sometimes the right wing Commander of Amír al-muminín’s army and sometimes the infantry Commander.

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SERMON 182

Praise of Alláh for His bounties

Praise be to Alláh Who is recognised without being seen and Who creates without trouble. He created the creation with His Might, and receives the devotion of rulers by virtue of His dignity. He exercises superiority over great men through His generosity. It is He who made His creation to populate the world and sent towards the jinn and human beings His messengers to unveil it for them, to warn them of its harm, to present to them its examples, to show them its defects and to place before them a whole collection of matters containing lessons about the changings of health and sickness in this world, its lawful things and unlawful things and all that Alláh has ordained for the obedient and the disobedient, namely, Paradise and Hell and honour and disgrace. I extend my praise to His Being as He desires His creation to praise Him. He has fixed for everything a measure, for every measure a time limit, and for every time limit a document.

A part of the same sermon
About the greatness and importance of the Holy Qur'án

The Qur'án orders as well as refrains, remains silent and also speaks. It is the proof of Alláh before His creation. He has taken from them a pledge (to act) upon it. He has perfected its effulgence, and completed through it His religion. He let the Prophet leave this world when he had conveyed to the people all His commands of guidance through the Qur'án. You should therefore regard Alláh great as he has held Himself great, because He has not concealed anything of His religion from you, nor has He left out anything which He likes or which He dislikes, but He made for it a clear emblem (of guidance) and a definite sign which either refrains from it or calls towards it. His pleasure is the same for all time to come.

You should know that He will not be pleased with you for anything for which He was displeased with those before you, and He will not be displeased with you for anything for which He was pleased with those before you. You are treading on a clear path, and are speaking the same as the people before you had spoken. Alláh is enough for your needs in this world. He has persuaded you to remain thankful, and has made it obligatory on you to mention Him with your tongues.

Warning against punishment on the Day of Judgement

He has advised you to exercise fear and has made it the highest point of His pleasure and all that He requires from His creatures. You should therefore fear Alláh, who is such that you are as though just in front of Him, and your forelocks are in His grip, and your change of position is in His control. If you conceal a matter, He will know of it. If you disclose a matter, He will record it. For this He has appointed honoured guards (angels) who do not omit any rightful matter nor include anything incorrect. You should know that whoever fears Alláh, He would make for him a way to get out of troubles and (grant him) a light (to help him) out of darkness. He will ever keep him in whatever condition) he wishes, and will make him stay in a position of honour near Himself, in the house which He has made for Himself. The shade of this house is His house is His throne, its light is His effulgence, its visitors are His angels and its companions are His prophets.

Therefore, hasten towards the place of return and go ahead of (your) deaths (by collecting provision for the next world). Shortly, the expectations of the people will be cut short and death will overtake them while the door of repentance will be closed for them. You are still in a place to which those who were before you have been wishing to return. In this world, which is not your house, you are just a traveller in motion. You have been given the call to leave from here, and you have been ordered to collect provision while you are here. You should know that this thin skin cannot tolerate the Fire (of Hell). So, have pity on yourselves because you have already tried it in the tribulations of the world.

Have you ever seen the crying of a person who has been pricked with a thorn or who bleeds due to stumbling or whom hot sand has burnt? How would he feel when he is between two frying pans of Hell with stones all round with Satan as his companion? Do you know that when Málik (the guard-in-charge of Hell) is angry with the fire, its parts begin to clash with each other (in rage), and, when he scolds it, it leaps between the doors of Hell crying on account of his scolding.

O’ you old and big whom old age has made hoary, how will you feel when rings of fire will touch the bones of your neck, and handcuffs hold so hard that they eat away the flesh of the forearms? (Fear) Alláh ! Alláh! O’ crowd of men, while you are in good health before sickness (grips you) and you are in ease before straitness (overtakes you). You should try for the release of your necks before their mortgage is foreclosed, your eyes, thin down bellies, use your feet, spend your money, take your bodies and spend them over yourselves, and do not be niggardly about them, because Alláh the Glorified, has said:

... if you help (in the way) of Alláh, He will(also) help you, and will set firm your feet. (Qur’án, 47:7)

and He, the Sublime. has said:

Who is he who would loan unto Alláh a goodly loan? so that He may double it for him, and for him shall be a noble recompense. (Qur’án, 57:11)

He does not seek your support because of any weakness, nor does He demand a loan from you because of shortage. He seeks your help, although He possesses all the armies of the skies and the earth and He is strong and wise. He seeks a loan from you, although He owns the treasures of the skies and the earth and He is rich and praiseworthy. (Rather) He intends to try you as to which of you performs good acts. You should therefore be quick in performance of (good) acts so that your way be with His neighbours in His abode; He made His Prophet’s companions of these neighbours and made the angels to visit them. He has honoured their ears so that the sound of Hell fire may never reach
them, and He has afforded protection to their bodies from weariness and fatigue.

. . . that is the grace of Alláh, He bestoweth it upon whomsoever He willeth; and Alláh is the Lord of Mighty Grace. (Qur’án, 57:21)

I say you are hearing. I seek Alláh’s help for myself and yourselves. He is enough for me and He is the best dispenser.

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SERMON 183

One of the Khárijites al-Burj ibn Mus'hir at-Tá'í raised the slogan, "Command behoves only Alláh" in such a way that Amír al-mu'minín heard it. On hearing it he said:

Keep quite, may Alláh make you ugly, O' you with broken tooth. Certainly, by Alláh, when truth became manifest even then your personality was weak and your voice was lose. But when wrong began to shout loudly you again sprouted up like the horns of a kid.

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SERMON 184

Praise of Alláh and His wonderful creatures

Praise be to Alláh. He is such that senses cannot perceive Him, place cannot contain Him, eyes cannot see Him and veils cannot cover Him. He proves His eternity by the coming into existence of His creation, and (also) by originating His creation (He proves) His existence, and by their (mutual) similarity He proves that there is nothing similar to Him. He is true in His promise. He is too high to be unjust to His creatures. He stands by equity among His creation and practices justice over them in His commands. He provides evidence through the creation of things of His being from ever, through their marks of incapability of His power, and through their powerlessness against death of His eternity.

He is One, but not by counting. He is everlasting without, any limit. He is existent without any support. Minds admit of Him without (any activity of the) senses. Things which can be seen stand witness to Him without confronting Him. Imagination cannot encompass Him. He manifests Himself to the imagination with his help for the imagination, and refuses to be imagined by the imagination. He has made imagination the arbiter (in this matter). He is not big in the sense that volume is vast and so His body is also big. Nor is He great in the sense that His limits should extend to the utmost and so His frame be extensive. But He is big in position and great in authority.

About the Holy Prophet

I stand witness that Muhammad is His slave, His chosen Prophet and His responsible trustee -- may Alláh bless him and his descendants. Alláh sent him with undeniable proofs, a clear success and open paths. So he conveyed the message declaring the truth with it. He led the people on the (correct) highway, established signs of guidance and minarets of light, and made Islam's ropes strong and its knots firm.

A part of the same sermon

About the creation of animal species

Had they pondered over the greatness of His power and the vastness of His bounty they would have returned to the right path and feared the punishment of the Fire; but hearts are sick and eyes are impure. Do they not see the small things He has created, how He strengthened their system and opened for them hearing and sight and made for them bones and skins? Look at the ant with its small body and delicate form. It can hardly be seen in the corner of the eye, nor by the perception of the imagination - how it moves on the earth and leaps at its livelihood. It carries the grain to its hole and deposits it in its place of stay. It collects during the summer for its winter, and during strength for the period of its weakness. Its livelihood is guaranteed, and it is fed according to fitness. Alláh, the Kind, does not forget it and (Alláh the Giver) does not deprive it, even though it may be in dry stone or fixed rocks.

If you have thought about its digestive tracts in its high and low parts, the carapace of its belly, and its eyes and its ears in its head you would be amazed at its creation and you would feel difficulty in describing it. Exalted is He who made it stand on its legs and erected it on its pillars (of limbs). No other originator took part with Him in its origination and no one having power assisted Him in its creation. If you tread on the paths of your imagination and reach its extremity it will not lead you anywhere except that the Originator of the ant is the same as He who is the Originator of the date-palm, because everything has (the same) delicacy and detail, and every living being has little difference.

The Creation of the Universe

In His creation, the big, the delicate, the heavy, the light, the strong, the weak are all equal.(1) So is the sky, the air, the winds and the water. Therefore, you look at the sun, moon, vegetation, plants, water, stone, the difference of this night and day, the springing of the streams, the large number of the mountains, the height of their peaks, the diversity of languages and the variety of tongues. Then woe be to him who disbelieves in the Ordainer and denies the Ruler. They believe that they are like grass for which there is no cultivator nor any maker for their diverse shapes. They have not relied on any argument for what they assert, nor on any research for what they have heard. Can there be any construction without a Constructor, or any offence without an offender.

The wonderful creation of the locust

If you wish you can tell about the locust (as well). Alláh gave it two red eves, lighted for them two moon -- like pupils, made for it small ears, opened for it a suitable mouth and gave it keen sense, gave it two teeth to cut with and two sickle-like feet to grip with. The farmers are afraid of it in the matter of crops since they cannot drive it away even though they may join together. The locust attacks the fields and satisfies its desires (of hunger) from them although its body is not equal to a thin finger.

About the Glory of Alláh

Glorified is Alláh before Whom every one in the skies or the earth bows in prostration willingly or unwillingly, submits to Him by placing his cheeks and face (in the dust), drops before Him (in obedience) peacefully and humbly, and hands over to Him full control in fear and apprehension.

The birds are bound by His commands. He knows the number of their feathers and their breaths. He has made their feet to stand on water and on land. He has ordained their livelihoods. He knows their species: this is the crow, this is the eagle, this is the pigeon and this is the ostrich. He called out every bird with its name (while creating it) and provided it with its livelihood. He created heavy clouds and produced from them heavy rain and spread it on various lands. He drenched the earth after its dryness and grew vegetation from it after its barrenness.

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(1). The meaning is that if the smallest thing in creation is examined it will be found to contain all that which is found in the biggest creatures, and each will exhibit the same reflection of natures, workmanship and performance, and the ratio of each to Alláh's might and power will be the same, whether it be as small as an ant or as big as a date palm. Is it not that making a small thing is easy for Him while the making of a big thing is difficult for Him, because the diversity of colour, volume and quantity is just based on the dictates of His sagacity and expediency, but as regards creation itself there is no difference among them. Therefore, this uniformity of creation is a proof of the oneness and unity of the Creator.

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SERMON 185

About the Oneness of Alláh. This sermon contains principles of knowledge which no other sermon contains

He who assigns to Him (different) conditions does not believe in His oneness, nor does he who likens Him grasp His reality. He who illustrates Him does not signify Him. He who points at Him and imagines Him does not mean Him. Everything that is known through itself has been created, and everything that exists by virtue of other things is the effect (of a cause). He works but not with the help of instruments. He fixes measures but not with the activity of thinking. He is rich but not by acquisition.

Times do not keep company with Him, and implements do not help Him. His Being precedes times. His Existence precedes non-existence and His eternity precedes beginning. By His creating the senses it is known that He has no senses. By the contraries in various matters it is known that He has no contrary, and by the similarity between things it is known that there is nothing similar to Him. He has made light the contrary of darkness, brightness that of gloom, dryness that of moisture and heat that of cold. He produces affection among inimical things.

He fuses together diverse things, brings near remote things and separates things which are joined together. He is not confined by limits, nor counted by numbers. Material parts can surround things of their own kind, and organs can point out things similar to themselves. The word(1) *"mundhu"* (i.e. since) disproves their eternity, the word *"qad"* (that denotes nearness of time of occurrence), disproves their being from ever and the word *"lawlá"* (if it were not) keep them remote from perfection.

Through them the Creator manifests Himself to the intelligence, and through them He is guarded from the sight of the eyes.

Stillness and motion do not occur in Him, and how can that thing occur in Him which He has Himself made to occur, and how can a thing revert to Him which He first created, and how can a thing appear in Him which He first brought to appearance. If it had not been so, His Self would have become subject to diversity, His Being would have become divisible (into parts), and His reality would have been prevented from being deemed Eternal. If there was a front to Him there would have been a rear also for Him . He would need completing only if shortage befell Him. In that case signs of the created would appear in Him, and He would become a sign (leading to other objects) instead of signs leading to Him. Through the might of His abstention (from affectedness) He is far above being affected by things which effect others.

He is that which does not change or vanish. The process of setting does not behove Him. He has not begotten any one lest He be regarded as having been born. He has not been begotten otherwise He would be contained within limits. He is too High to have sons. He is too purified to contact women. Imagination cannot reach Him so as to assign Him quantity. Understanding cannot think of Him so as to give him shape. Senses do not perceive Him so as to feel Him. Hands cannot touch Him so as to rub against Him. He does not change into any condition. He does not pass from one state to another. Nights and days do not turn Him old. Light and darkness do not alter Him.

It cannot be said that He has a limit or extremity, or end or termination; nor do things control Him so as to raise Him or lower Him, nor does anything carry Him so as to bend Him or keep Him erect. He is not inside things nor outside them. He conveys news, but not with the tongue or voice. He listens, but not with the holes of the ears or the organs of hearing. He says, but does not utter words. He remembers, but does not memorise. He determines, but not by exercising His mind. He loves and approves without any sentimentality (of heart). He hates and feels angry without any painstaking. When He intends to create someone He says "Be" and there he is, but not through a voice that strikes (the ears) is that call heard. His speech is an act of His creation. His like never existed before this. If had been eternal it would have been the second god.

It cannot be said that He came into being after He had not been in existence because in that case the attributes of the created things would be assigned to Him and there would remain no difference between them and Him, and He would have no distinction over them. Thus, the Creator and the created would become equal and the initiator and the initiated would be on the same level. He created (the whole of) creation without any example made by someone else, and He did not secure the assistance of any one out of His creation for creating it.

He created the earth and suspended it without being busy, retained it without support, made it stand without legs, raised it without pillars, protected it against bendings and curvings and defended it against crumbling and splitting (into parts). He fixed mountains on it like stumps, solidified its rocks, caused its streams to flow and opened wide its valleys. Whatever He made did not suffer from any flow, and whatever He strengthened did not show any weakness.

He manifests Himself over the earth with His authority and greatness. He is aware of its inside through his knowledge and understanding. He has power over every thing in the earth by virtue of His sublimity and dignity. Nothing from the earth that he may ask for defies Him, nor does it oppose Him so as to overpower Him. No swift-footed creature can run away from Him so as to surpass Him. He is not needy towards any possessing person so that he should feed Him. All things bow to Him and are humble before His greatness. They cannot flee away from His authority to someone else in order to escape His benefit or His harm. There is no parallel for Him who may match Him and no one like Him so as to equal Him.

He will destroy the earth after its existence, till all that exists on it will become non-existent. But the extinction of the world after its creation is no stranger than its first formation and invention. How could it be? Even if all the animals of the earth, whether birds or beasts, stabled cattle or pasturing ones, of different origins and species, dull people and sagacious men -- all jointly try to create (even) a mosquito they are not able to bring it into being and do not understand what is the way to its creation. Their wits are bewildered and wandering. Their powers fall short and fail, and return disappointed and tired, knowing that they are defeated and admitting their inability to produce it, also realising that they are too weak (even) to destroy it.

Surely, after the extinction of the world, Alláh the Glorified will remain alone with nothing else beside Him. He will be, after its extinction, as He was before its production: without time or place or moment or period. At this moment, period and time will not exist, and years and hours will disappear. There will be nothing except Alláh, the One, the All-powerful. To Him is the return of all matters. Its initial creation was not in its power; and the prevention of its extinction was (also) not in its power. If it had the power to prevent it, it would have existed for ever. When He made anything of the world, the making of it did not cause Him any difficulty, and the creation of anything which He created and formed did not fatigue Him. He did not create it to heighten His authority nor for fear of loss or harm, nor to seek its help against an overwhelming foe, nor to guard against any avenging opponent with its help, nor for the extension of His domain by its help, nor for boasting (over largeness of His possession) against a partner, nor because He felt lonely and desired to seek its company.

Then after its creation He will destroy it, but not because any worry has overcome Him in its upkeep and administration, nor for any pleasure that will accrue to Him, nor for the cumbrousness of anything over Him. The length of its life does not weary Him so as to induce Him to its quick destruction. But Alláh, the Glorified, has maintained it with His kindness, kept it intact with His command and perfected it with His power. Then after its destruction, He will resuscitate it, but not for any need of His own towards it, nor to seek the assistance of any of its things against it, nor to change over from the condition of loneliness to that of company, nor from the condition of ignorance and blindness to that of knowledge and search, nor from paucity and need towards needlessness and plenty, nor from disgrace and lowliness towards honour and prestige.

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(1). The meaning is that the sense for which the words *"mundhu"* , *"qad"* and *"lawlá"* have been formed is opposed to the attributes of "Ever", "Eternal" and "Perfect". Therefore, their application to anything would prove that they have come into existence from non-existence and are imperfect. For example, *"mundhu"* is used to denote time as is *"qad wujida mundu kadhá"* (this thing is found since so-and-so). Here a time limit has been stated, and anything for which a limit of time can be described cannot exist from ever or for ever. The word *"qad"* shows (indicating the present perfect tense) the immediate past. This sense also can apply to a thing which is limited in time. The word *"lawlá"* is used to denote the negation of something in another thing, as *"má ahsanahu wa akmalahu lawlá annahu kadhá"* (how handsome and perfect it would be if it were so-and-so). Therefore, the thing for which this word is used would be in need of others in handsomeness and perfection, and would remain deficient by itself.

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SERMON 186

Regarding the vicissitudes of time

(The mischiefs that are to occur and the absence of lawful ways of livelihood)

May my father and my mother be sacrificed for those few whose names are well-known in the sky and not known on the earth. Beware, you should expect what is to befall you such as adversity in your affairs, severance of relations and the rising up of inferior people. This will happen when the blow of a sword will be easier for a believer than to secure one Dirham lawfully. This will happen (1) when the reward of the beggar is more than that of the giver. This will be when you are intoxicated, not by drinking, but with wealth and plenty, you are swearing without compulsion and are speaking lies without compulsion. This will be when troubles hurt you as the saddle hurts the hump of the camel. How long will these tribulations be and how distant the
hope (for deliverance from them)?

O' people, throw away the reins of the horses who carry on their backs the weight of your hands (i.e. sins), do not cut away from your chief (Imám) otherwise you will blame yourself for your own doings. Do not jump in the fire which is in flames in front of you; keep away from its courses and leave the middle way for it. Because, by my life, the believer will die in its flames, and others will remain safe in it.

I am among you like a lamp in the darkness. Whoever enters by it will be lit from it. So listen O' men, preserve it and remain attentive with the ears of your hearts so that you may understand.

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(1). In that period the reward of the beggar who takes will be higher than that of the giver because the ways of earning livelihood of the rich will be unlawful, and whatever he will donate of it, its purpose will be showing himself, hypocrisy and seeking fame, for which he will not be entitled to any reward, while the poor who take it by force of their poverty and helplessness, and to spend it in the right manner, will deserve more reward and recompense.

The commentator, Ibn Abi'l-hadíd has written another meaning of it also, namely if the beggar does not take the wealth from the rich and it remains with him he will spend it on unlawful matters and enjoyments, and since his taking it from him prevents him from using it in unlawful manner; therefore, for this prevention of evil, the beggar will deserve more reward and recompense. (*Sharh Nahj al-balághah*, vol. 13, p. 97)

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SERMON 187

Alláh's favours

I advise you, O' people, to fear Alláh and to praise Him profusely for His favours to you and His reward for you and His obligations on you. See how He chose you for favours and dealt with you with mercy. You sinned openly; He kept you covered. You behaved in a way to incur His punishment, but He gave you more time.

Condition of persons facing death

I also advise you to remember death and to lessen your heedlessness towards it. Why should you be heedless of Him Who is not heedless of you? Why expect from him (i.e., the angel of death) who will not give you time? The dead whom you have been watching suffice as preachers. They were carried to their graves, not riding themselves, and were placed in them but not of their own accord. It seems as if they never lived in this world and as if the next world had always been their abode. They have made lonely the place where they were living, and are now living where they used to feel lonely. They remained busy about what they had to leave, and did not care for where they were to go. Now they cannot remove themselves from evil, nor add to their virtues They were attached to the world and it deceived them. They trusted it and it overturned them.

Transience of this world

May Alláh have pity on you. You should therefore hasten towards (the preparation of) houses which you have been commanded to populate, and towards which you have been called and invited. Seek the completion of Alláh's favours on you by exercising endurance in His obedience and abstention from His disobedience, because tomorrow is close to today. How fast are the hours of the day, how fast are the days in the month, how fast are the months in the years and how fast the years in a life.

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SERMON 188

Steadfast and transient belief

One belief is that which is firm and steadfast in hearts, and one is that which remains temporarily in the heart and the breast up to a certain time. If you were to acquit (yourself) before any person, you should wait till death approaches him, for that is the time limit for being acquitted.

And immigration stands as its original position. Alláh has no need towards him who secretly accepts belief or him who openly does so. Immigration will not apply to any one unless he recognises the proof (of Alláh) on the earth. Whoever recognises him and acknowledges him would be a *muhájir* (immigrant). *Isti_`áf* (i.e. freedom from the obligation of immigration) does not apply to him whom the proof (of Alláh) reaches and he hears it and his heart preserves it.(1)

The challenge "Ask me before you miss me"
and prophecy about the Umayyads

Certainly, our case is difficult and complicated. No one can bear it except a believer whose heart Alláh has tried with belief. Our traditions will not be preserved except by trustworthy hearts and (men of) solid understanding. O' people! ask me before you miss me, because certainly I am acquainted with the passages of the sky more than the passages of the earth,(2) and before that mischief springs upon its feet which would trample even the nosestring and destroy the wits of the people.

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(1). This is the interpretation of the word *"muhájir"* and *"musta_`af"* as mentioned in the Holy Qur'án:

> *Verily those whom the angels take away* (at death*) while they are unjust to their* (own) *selves* (in sin), *they* (the angels) *shall ask* (the sinning souls): *"In what state were ye?" They shall reply, "Weakened (musta_`af* - and oppressed)*were we in the land;" They* (angels) *will say "Was not the land of Alláh vast* (enough)*for you to immigrate therein?" So these* (are those) *whose refuge shall be Hell; and what a bad resort it is. Except the* (really) *weakened ones from among the men and the women and the children, who have not in their power the means* (to escape from the unbelievers) *and nor do they find the* (right) *way. So these, may be, Alláh will pardon them; and Alláh is the Clement, the Oft-forgiving.* (4:97-99)

The meaning of Amír al-mu'minín here is that *hijrah* (immigration) was not only obligatory during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet, but it is a permanent obligation. This immigration is even now obligatory for attaining the proof of Alláh and the true religion. Therefore, if one has attained the proof of Alláh and believed in it, even if he is in midst of the unbelievers of his locality, he is not duty bound to immigrate.

The *"musta_`af"* (weakened) is one who is living among the unbelievers and is far from being informed of the proofs of Alláh, and at the same time he is unable to immigrate in order to attain the proofs of Alláh.

(2). Some people have explained this saying of Amír al-mu'minín to mean that by the passages of the earth he means matters of the world and by passages of the sky matters of religious law and that Amír al-mu'minín intends to say that he knows the matters of religious law and commandments more than the worldly matters. Thus, Ibn Maytham al-Bahrání writes (in *Sharh Nahj al-balághah*, vol. 4, pp. 200-201):

> It is related from al-`Allámah al-Wabarí, that he said that Amír al-mu'minín's intention is to say that the scope of his religious knowledge is larger than his knowledge about matters of the world.

But taking the context into account, this explanation cannot be held to be correct because this sentence (which is the subject of explanation) has been used as the cause of the sentence "Ask me before you miss me", and after it, is the prophesy about revolt. In between these two the occurrence of the sentence that "I know religious matters more than worldly matters", makes the whole utterance quite uncounted, because Amír al-mu'minín's challenge to ask whatever one likes is not confined to matters of religious law only so this sentence could be held as its cause. Then, after that, the prophesy of the rising up of the revolt has nothing to do with matters of religious law, so that it could be put forth as a proof of more knowledge of religious matters. To ignore the clear import of the words

and to interpret them in a way which does not suit the occasion, does not exhibit a correct spirit, when from the context also the same meaning accrues which the words openly convey. Thus, it is to give a warning about the Umayyad's mischief that Amír al-mu'minín uttered the words: "'Ask me whatever you like'; because I know the paths and courses of divine destiny more than the passages of the earth. So, even if you ask me about matters which are recorded in the 'preserved tablet' and concern divine destiny I can tell you, and a serious mischief is to rise against me in those matters in which you should have doubt, because my eyes are more acquainted with those ethereal lines which concern the occurrence of events and mischiefs than, with what I know about live appearing on the earth. The occurrence of this mischief is as certain as an object seen with eyes. You should therefore ask me its details and the way to keep safe from it, so that you may be able to manage your defence when the times comes." This meaning is supported by the successive sayings of Amír al-mu'minín which he uttered in connection with the unknown, and to which the future testified. Thus, Ibn Abi'l Hadíd comments on this claim of Amír al-mu'minín as follows:

> Amír al-mu'minín's claim is also supported by his sayings about future events which he uttered not once or a hundred times but continuously and successively, from which there remains no doubt that whatever he spoke was on the basis of knowledge and certainly and not in the way of chance. (*Sharh Nahj al-balághah*,
> vol. 13, p. 106)

In connection with this saying of Amír al-mu'minín it has already been shown and explained (in Sermon 92, Foot-note No. 2) that no one else dared advance such a claim, and those who made such a claim had to face only disgrace and humility. About the prophecies made by Amír al-mu'minín see Ibn Abi'l-hadíd, *Sharh Nahj al-balághah*, vol. 7, pp. 47-51; al-Qá_í Núru'l-Láh al-Mar`ashí, *Ihqáq al-haqq* (New ed.), vol. 8, pp. 87-182.

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SERMON 189

Importance of fear of Alláh, desolateless of the grave, and about the death of the lover of Ahlu'l-bayt being like that of a martyr

I praise Him out of gratefulness for His reward, and I seek His assistance in fulfilling His rights. He has a strong army. His dignity is grand. I stand witness that Muhammad - peace and blessing of Alláh be upon him and his progeny - is His slave and His Prophet. He called (people) to His obedience and overpowered His enemies by fighting for the sake of His religion. People's joining together to falsify him and their attempt to extinguish His light did not prevent him from it.

You should therefore exercise fear of Alláh because it has a rope whose twist is strong and its pinnacle is lofty and invulnerable. Hasten toward death in its pangs (by doing good acts) and be prepared for it before its approach, because the ultimate end is the Day of Judgement. This is enough preaching for one who understands and enough of a lesson for one who does not know. What idea do you have, before reaching that end, of the narrowness of grave, the hardship of loneliness, fear of the passage towards the next world, the pangs of fear, the shifting of ribs here and there (due to narrowing of the grave), the deafness of ears, the darkness of the grave, fear of the promised punishment, the closing of the receptacle of the grave and the laying of stones?

Therefore, (fear) Alláh, (fear) Alláh, O' creatures of Alláh, because the world is behaving with you in the usual way and you and the Day of Judgement are in the same rope (close to each other). As though it has come with its signs, has approached with its pleas and has made you stand in its way; and as though it has come forward with all its quakings and has settled down with its chest on the ground while the world has parted from its people and has turned them out of its lap. It was like a day that has passed or a month that has gone by. Its new things have become old and the fat ones have become thin.

They are in a narrow place, in very complicated affairs and in a fire whose pain is sharp, cries are loud, flames are rising, sound is trembling, burning is severe, abatement is remote; its fuel is burning, its threats are fearful, its hollows are hidden, its sides are dark, its vessels are aflame, and everything about it is abominable.

> *And shall be conveyed those who feared* (the wrath of) *their Lord, in companies unto the garden. . .* (Qur'án. 39:73)

They are safe from chastisement, away from punishment, and kept aloof from fire. Their abode will be peaceful and they will be pleased with their longing and their place of stay. These are the people whose acts in this world were chaste, their eyes were tearful, their nights in this world were like days because of fearing and seeking forgiveness, and their days were like nights because of feeling of loneliness and separation. Therefore, Alláh made Paradise the place of their (eventual) return and a reward in recompense.... *They were most eligible and suitable for it;...* (Qur'án, 48:26) in the eternal domain and everlasting favours.

Therefore, O' creatures of Alláh, pay regard to all that by being regardful of which one will succeed and by ignoring which one will incur loss, and hasten towards your death by means of your (good) acts, because you are bound by what you have done in the past and you have to your credit only what (good acts) you have sent forward. (Behave in such a way) as though the feared event (death) has come upon you, so that you cannot return (to do good acts) nor can you be cleared of evil acts. Alláh may prompt us and you for His obedience and obedience of His Prophet, and forgive us and you by His great mercy.

Stick to the earth, keep patient in trials, do not move your hands and swords after the liking of your tongues, and do not make haste in matters in which Alláh has not asked for haste because any one of you who dies in his bed while he had knowledge of the rights of Alláh and the rights of His Prophet and members of the Prophet's house, will die as martyr. His reward is incumbent on Alláh. He is also eligible to the recompense of what good acts he has intended to do, since his intention takes the place of drawing his sword. Certainly, for every thing there is a time and a limit.

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SERMON 190

Praise of Alláh

Praise be to Alláh Whose praise is wide-spread, Whose army is over-powering and Whose dignity is grand. I praise Him for His successive favours and His great gifts. His forbearance is high so that He forgives and is just in whatever He decides. He knows what is going on and what has already passed. He crafted all creation by His knowledge and produced it by His intelligence without limitation, without learning, without following the example of any intelligent producer, without committing any mistake and without the availability of any group (for help); I stand witness that Muhammad - the peace and blessing of Alláh be upon him and his descendants - is His slave and His messenger whom He deputed (at a time) when people were collecting in the abyss and moving in bewilderment. The reins of destruction were dragging them, and the locks of malice lay fixed on their hearts.

Advice about fear of Alláh and an account of this world and its people

I advise you, O' creature of Alláh, that you should have fear of Alláh because it is a right of Alláh over you and it creates your right over Alláh, and that you should seek Alláh's help in it, and its help in (meeting) Alláh. Certainly, for today fear of Alláh is a protection and a shield, and for tomorrow (the Day of Judgement) it is the road to Paradise. Its way is clear and he who treads it is the gainer. Whoever holds it, guards it. It has presented itself to the people who have already passed and to those coming from behind, because they will need it tomorrow (on the Day of Judgement) when Alláh will revive His creation again, take back what He has given and take account of what He has bestowed. How few will be those who accept it and practise it as it ought to be practised. They will be very few in number, and they are the people who correspond to the description given by Alláh, the Glorified, when He says:

... And very few of My creatures are grateful! (Qur'án. 34:13)

Therefore, hasten with your ears towards it and intensify your efforts for it. Make it a substitute for all your past (short-comings) to take their place as a successor, and make it your supporter against every opponent. Turn your sleep into wakefulness by its help, and pass your days with it. Make it the equipment of your hearts, wash your sins with it, treat your ailments with it and hasten towards your death with it. Take a lesson from him who neglects it, so that others who follow it should not take a lesson from you (i.e., from your neglecting it). Beware, therefore; you should take care of it and should take care of yourselves through it.

Keep away from this world and proceed towards the next world infatuatedly. Do not regard humble he whom fear Alláh has given a high position, and do not accord a high position to him whom this world has given a high position. Do not keep your eyes on the shining clouds of the world, do not listen to him who speaks of it, do not respond to him who calls towards it, do not seek light from its glare, and do not die in its precious things, because its brightness is deceitful, its words are false, its wealth is liable to be looted, and its precious thing are to be taken away.

Beware, this world attracts and then turns away. It is stubborn, refusing to go ahead. It speaks lies and misappropriates. It disowns and is ungrateful. It is malicious and abandons (its lovers). It attracts but causes trouble. Its condition is changing, its step shaking, its honour disgrace, its seriousness jest, and its height lowliness. It is a place of plunder and pillage, and ruin and destruction. Its people are ready with their feet to drive, to overtake and to depart. Its routes are bewildering, its exits are baffling, and its schemes end in disappointment. Consequently, strongholds betray them, houses throw them out and cunning fails them.

Some of them are like hocked camel, some like butchered meat, some like severed limbs, some like spilt blood, some are biting their hands (in pain) some are rubbing their palms (in remorse), some are holding their cheeks on their hands (in anxiety), some are cursing their own views and some are retreating from their determination. But the time for action has gone away and the hour of calamity has approached, *while* (there was no longer) *the time to escape* (Qur'án, 38:3). Alas! Alas! what has been lost is lost! what has gone is gone! The world has passed in its usual manner.

So wept not on them the heavens and the earth nor were they respited. (Qur'án, 44:29)

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SERMON 191

Known as "al-Khutbah al-Qási`ah" (Sermon of Disparagement)

(It comprises disparagement of Satan [Iblís] for his vanity and his refusing to prostrate before Adam [pbuh], and his being the first to display bigotry and to act through vanity; it comprises a warning to people treading in Satan's path)

Praise be to Alláh who wears the apparel of Honour and Dignity and has chosen them for Himself instead of for His creation. He has made them inaccessible and unlawful for others. He has selected them for His own great self, and has hurled a curse on him who contests with Him concerning them.

Alláh's trial and the vanity of Iblís

Then He put His angels on trial concerning these attributes in order to distinguish those who are modest from those who are vain. Therefore, Alláh, who is aware of whatever is hidden in the hearts and whatever lies behind the unseen said:

> *. . . "Verily I am about to create man from clay," And when I have completed and have breathed into him of My spirit, then fall ye prostrating in obeisance unto him. And did fall prostrating in obeisance the angels all together, Save lblís;...* (Qur'án. 38:71-74)

His vanity stood in his way. Consequently, he felt proud over Adam by virtue of his creation and boasted over him on account of his origin. Thus, this enemy of Alláh is the leader of those who boast, and the fore-runner of the vain. It is he who laid the foundation of factionalism, quarreled with Alláh about the robe of greatness, put on the dress of haughtiness and took off the covering of humility. Do you not see how Alláh made him low on account of his vanity and humiliated him for his feigning to be high? He discarded him in this world and provided for him burning fire in the next world.

If Alláh had wanted to create Adam from a light whose glare would have dazzled the eyes, whose handsomeness would have amazed the wits and whose smell would have caught the breath, He could have done so; and if He had done so, people would have bowed to him in humility and the trial of the angels through him would have become easier. But Alláh, the Glorified, tries His creatures by means of those things whose real nature they do not know in order to distinguish (good and bad) for them through the trial, and to remove vanity from them
and keep them and keep them aloof from pride and self-admiration.

You should take a lesson from what Alláh did with Satan; namely He nullified his great acts and extensive efforts on account of the vanity of one moment, although Satan had worshipped Alláh for six thousand years - whether by the reckoning of this world or of the next world is not known. Who now can remain safe from Alláh after Satan by committing a similar disobedience? None at all. Alláh, the Glorified, cannot let a human being enter Paradise if he does the same thing for which Alláh turned out from it an angel. His command for the inhabitants in the sky and of the earth is the same. There is no friendship between Alláh and any individual out of His creation so as to give him license for an undesirable thing which He has held unlawful for all the worlds.

Warning against Satan

Therefore, you should fear lest Satan infects you with his disease, or leads you astray through his call, or marches on you with his horsemen and footmen, because, by my life, he has put the arrow in the bow for you, has stretched the bow strongly, and has aimed at you from a nearby position, and:

> *He* (Satan) *said: "My Lord! because Thou hast left me to stray, certainly will I adorn unto them the path of error, and certainly will I cause them all to go astray."* (Qur'án, 15:39)

Although he (Satan) had said so only by guessing about the unknown future and by wrong conjecturing, yet the sons of vanity, the brothers of haughtiness and the horsemen of pride and intolerance proved him to be true, so much so that when disobedient persons from among you bowed before him, and his greed about you gained
strength; and what was a hidden secret turned into a clear fact, he spread his full control over you and marched with his forces towards you.

Then they pushed you into the hollows of disgrace, threw you into the whirlpools of slaughter, and trampled you, wounding you by striking your eyes with spears, cutting your throats, tearing your nostrils, breaking your limbs and taking you in ropes of control towards the fire already prepared. In this way he became more harmful to your religion and a greater kindler of flames (of mischief) about your worldly matters than the enemies against whom you showed open opposition and against whom you marched your forces.

You should therefore spend all your force against him, and all your efforts against him, because, by Alláh, he boasted over your (i.e., Adam's) origin, questioned your position and spoke lightly of your lineage. He advanced on you with his army, and brought his footmen towards your path. They are chasing you from every place, and they are hitting you at every finger joint. You are not able to defend by any means, nor can you repulse them by any determination. You are in the thick of disgrace, the ring of straitness, the field of death and the way of distress.

You should therefore put out the fires of haughtiness and the flames of intolerance that are hidden in your hearts. This vanity can exist in a Muslim only by the machinations of Satan, his haughtiness, mischief and whisperings. Make up your mind to have humility over your heads, to trample self-pride under your feet and to cast off vanity from your necks. Adopt humility as the weapon between you and your enemy, Satan and his forces. He certainly has, from every people, fighters, helpers, footmen and horsemen. Do not be like him who feigned superiority over the son of his own mother without any distinction given to him by Alláh except the feeling of envy which his feeling of greatness created in him and the fire of anger that vanity kindled in his heart. Satan blew into his nose his own vanity, after which Alláh gave him remorse and made him responsible for the sins of all killers up to the Day of Judgement.

Caution against vanity and boasting about ignorance

Beware! you strove hard in revolting and created mischief on the earth in open opposition to Alláh and in challenging the believers over fighting. (You should fear) Alláh! Alláh! in feeling proud of your vanity and boasting over ignorance, because this is the root of enmity and the design of Satan wherewith he has been deceiving past people and bygone ages, with the result that they fell into the gloom of his ignorance and the hollows of his misguidance, submitting to his driving and accepting his leadership. In this matter the hearts of all the people were similar, and centuries passed by, one after the other, in just the same way, and there was vanity with which chests were tightened.

Caution against obeying haughty leaders and elders

Beware! beware of obeying your leaders and elders who felt proud of their achievements and boasted about their lineage. They hurled the (liability for) things on Alláh and quarrelled with Alláh in what He did with them, contesting His decree and disputing His favours. Certainly, they are the main foundation of obstinacy, the chief pillars of mischief and the swords of pre-Islamic boasting over fore-fathers. Therefore, fear Alláh, do not become antagonistic to His favours on you, nor jealous of His bounty over you (1) and do not obey the claimants (of Islam) whose dirty water you drink along with your clean one, whose ailments you mix with your healthiness and whose wrongs you allow to enter into your rightful matters.

They are the foundation of vice and the linings of disobedience. Satan has made them carriers of misguidance and the soldiers with whom he attacks men. They are interpreters through whom he speaks in order to steal away your wits, enter into your eyes and blow into your ears. In this way he makes you the victim of his arrows, the treading ground of his footsteps and source of strength for his hands. Take instruction from how he brought Alláh's wrath, violence, chastisement and punishment on those who were vain among the past people. Take admonition from their lying on their cheeks and falling on their sides, and seek Alláh's protection from the dangers of vanity, as you seek His protection from calamities.

The humbleness of the Holy Prophet

Certainly. if Alláh were to allow anyone to indulge in pride He would have allowed it to his selected prophets and vicegerents. But Alláh, the Sublime, disliked vanity for them and liked humbleness for them. Therefore, they laid their cheeks on the ground, smeared their faces with dust, bent themselves down for the believers and remained humble people. Alláh tried them with hunger, afflicted them with difficulty, tested them with fear, and upset them with troubles. Therefore, do not regard wealth and progeny the criterion for Alláh's pleasure and displeasure, as you are not aware of the chances of mischief and trials during richness and power as Alláh, the Glorified, the Sublime, has said:

> *What! Think they that what We aid them with of wealth and children, We are hastening unto them the good things? Nay! they (only) perceive not.* (Qur'án, 23:55-56)

Certainly, Alláh the Glorified, tries His creatures who are vain about themselves through His beloved persons who are humble in their eyes.

When Músá son of `Imrán went to Pharaoh along with his brother Hárún (Aaron) wearing (coarse) shirts of wool and holding sticks in their hands, they guaranteed him retention of his country and continuity of his honour if he submitted; but he said: "Do you not wonder at these two men guaranteeing me the continuity of my honour and the retention of my country although you see their poverty and lowliness. Otherwise, why do they not have gold bangles on their wrists?" He said so feeling proud of his gold and collected possessions, and considering wool and its cloth as nothing.

When Alláh, the Glorified, deputed His prophets, if He had wished to open for them treasures and mines of gold and (surround them with) planted gardens and to collect around them birds of the skies and beasts of the earth, He could have done so. If He had done so then there would have been no trial, nor recompense and no tidings (about the affairs of the next world). Those who accepted (His message) could not be given the recompense falling due after trial and the believers could not deserve the reward for good acts, and all these words (2) would not have retained their meanings. But Alláh, the Glorified, makes His Prophets firm in their determination and gives them weakness of appearance as seen from the eyes, along with contentment that fills the hearts and eyes resulting from care-freeness, and with want that pains the eyes and ears.

If the prophets possessed authority that could not be assaulted, or honour that could not be damaged or domain towards which the necks of people would turn and the saddles of mounts could be set, it would have been very easy for people to seek lessons and quite difficult to feel vanity. They would have then accepted belief out of fear felt by them or inclination attracting them, and the intention of them all would have been the same, although their actions would have been different. Therefore, Alláh, the Glorified decided that people should follow His prophets, acknowledge His books, remain humble before His face, obey His command and accept His obedience with sincerity in which there should not be an iota of anything else; and as the trial and tribulation would be stiffer the reward and recompense too should be larger.

The Holy Ka`bah

Do you not see that Alláh, the Glorified, has tried all the people among those who came before, beginning with Adam, upto the last ones in this world with stones which yield neither benefit nor harm, which neither see nor hear. He made those stones into His sacred house which He made a standby for the people. He placed it in the most rugged stony part of the earth and on a highland with least soil thereon, among the most narrow valleys between rough mountains. soft sandy plains, springs of scanty water and scattered habitants, where neither camels nor horses nor cows and sheep can prosper.

Then He commanded Adam and his sons to turn their attention towards it. In this way it became the centre of their journey in seeking pastures and the rendezvous for meeting of their carrier-beasts, so that human spirits hasten towards it from distant waterless deserts, deep and low lying valleys and scattered islands in the seas. They shake their shoulders in humbleness, recite the slogan of having reached His audience, march with swift feet, and have dishevelled hair and dusted faces. They throw their pieces of cloth on their backs, they have marred the beauty of their faces by leaving the hair uncut as a matter of great test, severe tribulation, open trial, and extreme refining. Alláh has made it a means to His mercy and an approach to His Paradise.

If Alláh, the Glorified, had placed His sacred House and His great signs among plantations, streams, soft and level plains, plenty of trees, an abundance of fruits, a thick population, close habitats, golden wheat, lush gardens, green land, watered plains, thriving orchards and crowded streets, the amount of recompense would have decreased because of the lightness of the trial. If the foundation on which the House is borne and the stones with which it has been raised had been of green emerald and red rubies, and there had been brightness and effulgence, then this would have lessened the action of doubts in the breasts, would have dismissed the effect of Satan's activity from the hearts, and would have stopped the surging of misgivings in people. But Alláh tries His creatures by means of different troubles, wants them to render worship through hardships and involves them in distresses, all in order to extract out vanity from their hearts, to settle down humbleness in their spirits and to make all this an open door for His favours and an easy means for His forgiveness (for their sins).

Caution against rebellion and oppressiveness

(Fear) Alláh! Alláh! from the immediate consequence of rebellion (to accrue in this world), and the eventual consequence of weighty oppressiveness (to accrue in the next world), and from the evil result of vanity, because it is the great trap of Satan and his big deceit which enters the hearts of the people like a fatal poison. It never goes waste, nor misses anyone - neither the learned because of his knowledge, nor the destitute (3) in his rags. This is the thing against which Alláh has protected His creatures who are believers by means of prayers, and alms-giving, and suffering the hardship of fasting in the days in which it has been made obligatory, in order to give their limbs peacefulness, to cast fear in their eyes, to make their spirits humble, to give their hearts humility and to remove haughtiness from them. All this is achieved through the covering of their delicate cheeks with dust in humility, prostrating their main limbs on the ground in humbleness, and retracting of their bellies so as to reach to their backs due to fasting by way of lowliness (before Alláh), besides giving all sorts of products of the earth to the needy and the destitute by way of alms.

Look what there is in these acts by way of curbing the appearance of pride and suppressing the traces of vanity. I cast my glance and noticed that no one in the world, except you, feels vanity for anything without a cause which may appeal to the ignorant, or a reason which may cling to the minds of the foolish, because you feel vanity for something for which no reason is discernible, nor any ground.

As for Satan, he felt proud over Adam because of his origin and taunted at him about his creation, since he said "I am of fire while you are of clay." In the same way the rich among the prosperous communities have been feeling vanity because of their riches, as (Alláh) said:

> *And said they: "We are more* (than you) *in wealth and in children, and we shall not be chastised."* (Qur'án, 34:35)

Enthusiasm for attractive manners, respectable position, and taking lessons from the past

In case you cannot avoid vanity, your vanity should be for good qualities, praiseworthy acts, and admirable matters with which the dignified and noble chiefs of the Arab families distinguished themselves, as attractive manners, high thinking, respectable position and good performances. You too should show vanity in praiseworthy habits like the protection of the neighbour, the fulfilment of agreements, obedience to the virtuous, opposition to the haughty, extending generosity to others, abstention from rebellion, keeping aloof from blood-shed, doing justice to people, suppressing anger and avoiding trouble on the earth. You should also fear what calamities befell peoples before you on account of their evil deeds and detestable actions. Remember, during good or bad circumstances, what happened to them, and be cautious that you do not become like them.

After you have thought over both the conditions of these people, attach yourself to everything with which their position became honourable, on account of which enemies remained away from them through which safety spread over them, by reason of which riches bowed before them and as a result of which distinction connected itself with their rope. These things were abstention from division, sticking to unity, calling each other to it and advising each other about it. You avoid everything which broke their backbone and weakened their power, such as malice in the heart, hatred in the chest, turning away (from each other's help) and withholding the hand from one another's assistance.

Think about the condition of people from among the believers who passed before you. What distresses and trials they were in! Were they not the most over-burdened among all the people and in the most straitened circumstances in the whole world? The Pharaohs took them as slaves. They inflicted on them the worst punishments and bitter sufferings. They continuously remained in this state of ruinous disgrace and severe subjugation. They found no method for escape and no way for protection. Till when Alláh, the Glorified, noticed that they were enduring troubles in His love and bearing distresses out of fear for Him, He provided escape from the distress of trials. So, He changed their disgrace into honour and fear into safety. Consequently, they became ruling kings and conspicuous leaders. and Alláh's favours over them reached limits to which their own wishes had not reached.

Look, how they were when their groups were united, their views were unanimous, their hearts were moderate, their hands used to help one another, their swords were intended for assisting one another, their eyes were sharp and their aims were the same. Did they not become masters of the corners of the earth and rulers over the neck of all the worlds? Thereafter, also see what happened to them towards the end when division overtook them, unity became fractured, and differences arose between their words and their hearts. They divided into various groups and were scattered fighting among themselves. Then Alláh took away from them the apparel of His honour and deprived them of the prosperity produced by His favours. Only their stories have remained among you for the guidance of those who may learn the lesson from them.

You should take a lesson from the fate of the progeny of Ismael, the children of Isaac and the children of Israel. How similar are their affairs and how akin are their examples. In connection with the details of their division and disunity, think of the days when Kisrás of Persia and the Caesars of Rome had become their masters. (4) They turned them out from the pastures of their lands the rivers of Iraq and the fertility of the world, towards thorny forests, the passages of (hot) winds and hardships in livelihood. In this way they turned them into just herders of camels. Their houses were the worst in the world and their places of stay were the most drought-stricken. There was not one voice towards which they could turn for protection, nor any shade of affection on whose strength they could repose trust.

Their condition was full of distress. Their hands were scattered. Their majority was divided. They were in great anguish and under layers of ignorance. They buried their daughters alive, worshipped idols, disregarded kinship and practised robbery.

Now, look at the various favours of Alláh upon them, that He deputed towards them a prophet who got them to pledge their obedience to him and made them unite at his call. (Look) how (Alláh's) bounty spread the wings of its favours over them and flowed for them streams of its blessing, and the whole community became wrapped in blissful prosperity. Consequently, they were submerged under its bounty and enjoyed its lush life. Their affairs were settled under the protection of a powerful ruler, and circumstances offered them overpowering honour, and all things became easy for them under the auspices of a strong country. They became rulers over the world and kings in the (various) parts of the earth. They became masters of those who were formerly their masters, and began issuing commands over those who used to command them. They were so strong that neither did their spears need testing nor did their weapons have any flaw.

Condemning his people

Beware! You have shaken your hands loose from the rope of obedience, and broken the divine fort around you by (resorting to) pre-Islamic rules. Certainly, it is a great blessing of Alláh, the Glorified, that He has engendered among them unity through the cord of affection in whose shade they walk and take shelter. This is a blessing whose value no one in the whole world realises, because it is more valuable than any price and higher than any wealth.

You should know that you have again reverted to the position of the Bedouin Arabs after immigration (to Islam), and have become different parties after having been once united. You do not possess anything of Islam except its name, and know nothing of belief save its show. You say, "The Fire yes. but no shameful position," as if you would throw down Islam on its face in order to defame its honour and break its pledge (for brotherhood) which Alláh gave you as a sacred trust on His earth and (a source of) peace among the people. Be sure that if you incline towards anything other than Islam. the unbelievers will fight you. Then there will be neither Gabriel nor Michael, neither *muhájirún* nor *ansár* to help you, but only the clashing of swords, till Alláh settles the matter for you.

Certainly, there are examples before you of Alláh's wrath, punishment, days of tribulations and happenings. Therefore, do not disregard His promises, ignoring His punishment, making light His wrath and not expecting His violence, because Alláh, the Glorified, did not curse the past ages except because they had left off asking others to do good acts and refraining them from bad acts. In fact Alláh cursed the foolish for committing sins and the wise because they gave up refraining others from evils. Beware! You have broken the shackles of Islam, have transgressed its limits, and have destroyed its commands.

Amír al-mu'minín's high position and wonderful deeds in Islam

Beware! surely Alláh has commanded me to fight those who revolt, or who break the pledge, or create trouble on the earth. As regards pledge-breakers, I have fought them, as regards deviators from truth, I have waged holy war against them, and as regards those who have gone out of the faith, I have put them in (serious) disgrace (5). As for Satan of the pit, (6) he too has been dealt with by me through the loud cry with which the scream of his heart and shaking of his chest was also heard. Only a small portion of the rebels has remained. If Alláh allows me one more chance over them I will annihilate them except a few remnants that may remain scattered in the suburb of the cities.

Even in my boyhood I had lowered the chest of (the famous men) of Arabia, and broken the horn points (i.e., defeated the chiefs) of the tribes of Rabí`ah and Mu_ar. Certainly, you know my position of close kinship and special relationship with the Prophet of Alláh - peace and blessing of Alláh be upon him and his descendants. When I was only a child he took charge of me. He used to press me to his chest and lay me beside him in his bed, bring his body close to

mine and make me smell his smell. He used to chew something and then feed me with it. He found no lie in my speaking, nor weakness in any act.

From the time of his weaning, Alláh had put a mighty angel with him to take him along the path of high character and good behaviour through day and night, while I used to follow him like a young camel following in the footprints of its mother. Every day he would show me in the form of a banner some of his high traits and commanded me to follow it. Every year he used to go in seclusion to the hill of Hirá', where I saw him but no one else saw him. In those days Islam did not exist in any house except that of the Prophet of Alláh - peace and blessing of Alláh be upon him and his descendants - and Khadíjah, while I was the third after these two. I used to see and watch the effulgence of divine revelation and message, and breathed the scent of Prophethood.

When the revelation descended on the Prophet of Alláh - peace and blessing of Alláh be upon him and his descendants - I heard the moan of Satan. I said, "O' Prophet of Alláh, what is this moan?" and he replied, "This is Satan who has lost all hope of being worshipped. O' `Alí, you see all that I see and you hear all that I hear, except that you are not a Prophet, but you are a vicegerent and you are surely on (the path of) virtue."

I was with him when a party of the Quraysh came to him and said to him, "O' Muhammad, you have made a big claim which none of your fore-fathers or those of your family have made. We ask you one thing; if you give us an answer to it and show it to us, we will believe that you are a prophet and a messenger, but if you cannot do it, we will know that you are a sorcerer and a liar."

The Messenger of Alláh said: "What do you ask for?" They said: "Ask this tree to move for us, even with its roots, and stop before you." The Prophet said, "Verily, Alláh has power over everything. If Alláh does it for you, will you then believe and stand witness to the truth?" They said "Yes". Then he said, "I shall show you whatever you want, but I know that you won't bend towards virtue, and there are among you those who will be thrown into the pit, and those who will form parties (against me)." Then the Holy Prophet said: "O' tree, if you do believe in Alláh and the Day of Judgement, and know that I am the Prophet of Alláh, come up with your roots and stand before me with the permission of Alláh." By Him who deputed the Prophet with truth, the tree did remove itself with its root and came with a great humming sound and a flapping like the flapping of the wings of birds, till it stopped before the Messenger of Alláh while some of its twigs came down onto my shoulders, and I was on the right side of the Holy Prophet.

When the people saw this they said by way of pride and vanity. "Now you order half of it to come to you and the other half of it remain (in its place)." The Holy Prophet ordered the tree to do the same. Then half of the tree advanced towards him in an amazing manner and with greater humming. It was about to touch the Prophet of Alláh. Then they said, disbelieving and revolting, "Ask this half to get back to its other half and be as it was." The Prophet ordered it and it returned. Then I said, "O' Prophet of Alláh, I am the first to believe in you and to acknowledge that the tree did what it did just now with the command of Alláh, the Sublime, in testimony to your Prophethood and to heighten your word. Upon this all the people shouted, "Rather a sorcerer, a liar; it is wonderful sorcery, he is very adept in it. Only a man like this (pointing to me) can stand testimony to you in your affairs."

Certainly, I belong to the group of people who care not for the reproach of anybody in matters concerning Alláh. Their countenance is the countenance of the truthful and their speech is the speech of the virtuous. They are wakeful during the nights (in devotion to Alláh), and over beacons (of guidance) in the day. They hold fast to the rope of the Qur'án. revive the traditions of Alláh and of His Prophet. They do not boast nor indulge in self conceit, nor misappropriate, nor create mischief. Their hearts are in Paradise while their bodies are busy in (good) acts.

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(1). The intention is that "you should not create conditions by which you may be deprived of Alláh's favours, like the jealous who aims at harming him of whom he is jealous."

(2). The intention is to say that if belief is accepted under force of awe and fear and worship is offered under the influence of power and authority then neither will it be belief in the true sense nor worship in real spirit. This is because belief is the name of inner testimony and heart-felt conviction. The conviction produced by force and compulsion can be only verbal but not heart-felt. Similarly, worship is the name of open acknowledgement of one's position of servitude. Worship which is devoid of the feeling of servitude or the sense of devotion and which is performed only in view of authority or fear cannot be real worship. Therefore, such belief and such worship would not present their correct connotation.

(3). The reason for specifying the learned and the poor is that the learned has the light of learning to lead him, which the destitution of the poor may deny to him. In spite of this, both the learned and the poor fall into his deceit.

Then how can the ignorant save himself from his clutches, and how can the rich who has all the means to get into wrong ways, defend himself against him.

Nay! Verily man is wont to rebel!

As the deemeth himself needless!

(4). If a glance is cast at the rise and fall and events and happenings of the past people this fact will shine like daylight that the rise and fall of communities is not the result of luck or change, but that, to a great extent, it is affected by their acts and deeds. And of whatever type those deeds are, their results and consequences are in accord with them. Consequently, the stories and events of past people openly reflect that the result of oppression and evil deeds has always been ruin and destruction, while the consequence of virtuous action and peaceful living was always good luck and success. Since time and people make no difference, if the same conditions appear again and the same actions are repeated the same results must accrue which had appeared in the earlier set of circumstances, because the accrual of the results of good or bad actions is sure and certain like the properties and effects of everything. It this were not so it would not be possible to kindle hope in the minds of the oppressed and the afflicted by presenting to them past events and their effects, nor could the oppressors and tyrants be warned of the ill-effects of their deeds, on the ground that it was not necessary that the same would accrue now as had accrued earlier. But it is the universality of causality which makes past events the object of a lesson for posterity. Consequently, it was for this purpose that Amír al-mu'minín provoked thinking and consideration and mentioned the various events of Banú Ismá`íl, Banú Isháq and Banú Isrá'íl and their affliction at the hands of the kings of Persia and Rome.

The progeny of Ismael, the elder son of Ibráhím (Abraham), is called Banú Ismá`íl while the progeny of his younger son Issac is called Banú Isháq which later continued to divide into various off-shoots and acquired different names. Their original abode was at Canaan in Palestine, where Ibráhím had settled after the immigration from the plains of the Euphrates and the Tigris. His son Ismá`íl had settled in the Hijáz, where Ibráhím had left him and his mother Hájar (Hagar). Ismá`íl married as-Sayyidah bint Mu_á_ a woman of the tribe of Jurhum which also inhabited this very area. His progeny sprang from her and spread throughout the world. The other son of Ibráhím namely Isháq remained in Canaan. His son was Ya`qúb (Jacob/lsrael) who married Liya the daughter of his mother's brother and after her death married his other daughter.

Both of them bore him progeny which is known as Banú Isrá'íl. One of his sons was Yúsuf (Joseph), who reached the neighbouring country, Egypt, through an accident, and, after suffering slavery and imprisonment, eventually became the ruler and occupier of the throne.

After this change, he sent for all his relations and kith and kin and in this way Egypt became the abode of Banú Isrá'íl. For some time they lived there in peace and safety, and led a life of respect and esteem, but by and by the locals began to view them with disdain and hatred and made them the target of all sorts of tyrannies, so much so
that they used to kill their children and retained their women as slave-maids, as a result of which their determination and courage was trampled and their spirit of freedom was completely subdued. At last, conditions changed and the period of their troubles came to an end, after four hundred years of the shackles of slavery; when Alláh sent Músá to deliver them from the oppression of the Pharaoh. Músá set off with them to leave Egypt, but in order to destroy the Pharaoh, Alláh turned them towards the Nile where there was all flood in front, and on the rear the huge forces of the Pharaoh. This bewildered them much, but Alláh commanded Músá to enter the river without fear. Thus, when he went forward, there appeared in the river not only one but several courses to pass through and Músá crossed to the other side of the river along with Banú Isrá'íl. Pharaoh was closely following. When he saw them passing he too advanced with his arm but when they reached the middle of the stream the still water began moving and, engulfing Pharaoh and his army in its waves, finished them. About them the Qur'án says:

And (remember ye) *when We delivered you from Pharaoh's people who afflicted you with grievous torment, slaying your sons and by letting your women alive, and in that was a great trial from your Lord.* (2:49)

However, when, after leaving the boundaries of Egypt, they entered their motherland Palestine, they

established their own state and began to live in freedom, and Alláh changed their lowliness and disgrace into the greatness and sublimity of rule and power. In this connection, Alláh says:

> *And made We inheritors the people who were deemed weak* (to inherit) *the eastern parts of the earth and the western parts of it, which we had blessed therein* (with fertility) *and the good word of thy Lord was fulfilled in the children of Israel for what they did endure; and destroyed We, what Pharaoh and his people had wrought, and what shade they did make.* (Qur'án, 7:137)

On occupying the throne of rule and regaining prosperity and peacefulness, Banú Isrá'íl forgot all the ignominies and disgraces of the period of slavery, and instead of being thankful to Alláh for the favours granted by Him they took to rebellion and revolt. Consequently, they shamelessly indulged in vices and misconduct and partook in mischiefs and evil deeds to the maximum, made lawful things unlawful and unlawful things lawful by false excuses and disobeyed the prophets who tried to preach and correct them under the command of Alláh, and even killed them. The natural consequence of their vicious activities was that they were caught in punishment for their deeds. Consequently, Nebuchadnezzar, who was ruling in Babylon (Iraq) in 600 B.C., rose to march against Syria and Palestine and killed seventy thousand Banú Isrá'íl with his blood-thirsty swords, devastated their towns, drove away the survivors with him like sheep and goats and threw them in the abyss of ignominy by turning them into slaves.

Although after this ruination there seemed no way for them to regain position and power, yet nature gave them still another chance to recover. When Nebuchadnezzar died and power came in the hands of Belshazzar he started all sorts of oppression on the people. Being disgusted with this, they sent word to the ruler of Persia that they were tired of enduring the oppression of their ruler and that he should rescue them from him, and free them from the oppression of Belshazzar. Cyrus the Great, who was a just and upright ruler, rose up in response to this request and, with the co-operation of the local population, overturned the government, as a consequence of which the yoke of slavery on Banú Isrá'íl's necks was also removed, and they were allowed to return to Palestine.

Thus, after seventy years of subjugation they again set foot in their homeland and took over the reins of government. If they had taken their lesson from the past events they would not have committed the same evils as a consequence of which they had to suffer slavery; but the mental constitution of this community was such that whenever they achieved prosperity and freedom from care they lost themselves in the intoxication of riches and in the enjoyment of pleasure, mocked the laws of religion, derided the prophets and even killing them did not mean anything serious to them. Thus, when their ruler Herod at the request of his sweetheart, beheaded the Prophet Yahyá (John) and presented his head to her, none of them raised any voice against this brutality or was affected by it in any manner. This was the state of their unruliness and fierceness when `Ísá made his appearance. He stopped them from evil deeds and exhorted them to adopt good habits, but they opposed him too and gave him troubles of various sorts, so much so that they tried to end his life. However, Alláh foiled all their devices and made `Ísá safe against their approach.

When their disobedience reached this stage and their capacity to accept guidance was completely wiped out, fate decided to ruin them and made full arrangements for their annihilation and destruction. The ruler of Roma (Byzantia) Vespasianus sent his son Titus to attack Syria, he laid siege round Jerusalem, demolished the houses and broke down the walls of the Synagogue as a result of which thousand of Banú Isrá'íl left their houses and became scattered abroad, while thousands died of hunger; and those who remained were put to sword. Most of them settled in Hijáz, but because of their rejecting Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.a.h.p.) their unity was so disturbed that they could never again converge on any one centre of honour and could never regain a life of prestige and dignity in place of disgrace and ignominy.

In the same way the ruler of Persia made serious attacks on Arabia and subjugated the inhabitants of those places. Thus, Shápúr ibn Hurmuz, at the age of sixteen, took with him four thousand combatants and attacked Arabs who resided within the boundaries of Persia and then advanced towards Bahrayn, Qatíf and Hajar and ruined Banú Tamím, Banú Bakr ibn Wá'il and Banú `Abd al-Qays and cut through the shoulders of seventy thousand Arabs, after which his nickname became "Dhu'l-Aktáf" (the shoulderer). He forced the Arabs that they should live in tents built of hair, should grow long hair on their heads, should not wear white clothes and should ride unsaddled horses. Then he settled twelve thousand people of Isfahán and other cities of Persia in the area between Iraq and Syria.

In this way he drove the inhabitants of those places from fertile lands to waterless forests which had neither any of the conveniences of life nor means of livelihood, and for long these people remained the victims of other's oppression due to their own disunity and division. At last, Alláh deputed the Prophet and raised them out of disgrace to the highest pinnacle of progress and sublimity.

(5). Amír al-mu'minín, Abú Ayyúb al-Ansárí, Jábir ibn `Abdulláh al-Ansárí, `Abdulláh ibn Mas`úd, `Ammár ibn Yásir, Abú Sa`íd al-Khudrí and `Abdulláh ibn `Abbás narrated that the Holy Prophet commanded `Alí ibn Abí Tálib to fight those who are pledge-breakers (*nákithín*), deviators from truth (*qásitín*) and those who have left the faith (máriqín). (*al-Mustadrak*, vol. 3, p. 139; *al-Istí`áb*, vol. 3, p. 1117; *Usd al-ghábah*, vol. 3, pp. 32-33; *ad-Durr al-manthúr*, vol. 6, p. 18; *al-Khasa'is al-kubrá*, vol. 2, p. 138; *Majma` az-zawá'id*, vol. 5, p. 186; vol. 6, p. 235; vol. 7, p. 238; *Kanz al-`ummál*, vol. 6, pp. 72, 82, 88, 155, 215, 319, 391, 392; *Táríkh Baghdád*, vol. 8, p. 340; vol. 13, pp. 186-187; *al-Táríkh*, Ibn `Asákir, vol. 5, p. 41; *at-Táríkh*, Ibn Kathír, vol. 7 pp. 304-306; *ar-Riyá_ an-na_arah*, vol. 2, p. 240; *Sharh al-mawáhib al-ladunniyyah*, vol. 3, pp. 316-317; *Muwa__ah al-awhám*, vol. 1, p. 386).

Ibn Abi'l-hadíd says: "It has been proved (by right ascription) from the Holy Prophet that he said to `Alí (p.b.u.h.):

> You will fight after me those who are pledge-breakers, deviators from truth and those who have gone out of the faith.

"The pledge-breakers were the people of Jamal, because they broke their allegiance with him. The deviators from truth were the people of Syria (ash-Shám) at Siffín. Those who have gone out of the faith were the Khárijites at an-Nahrawán. Regarding these three groups, Alláh says (about the first one):

> *Verily, those who swear their fealty unto thee do but swear fealty unto Alláh; the hand of Alláh is above their hands; so whosoever violateth his oath, doth violate it only to the hurt of his* (own) *self;...* (Qur'án, 48:10)

(About the second group) Alláh says:

> *And as for the deviators, they shall be for the hell, a fuel.* (Qur'án, 72:15)

Concerning the third group, Ibn Abi'l-hadíd has referred to the following tradition (*hadíth*) that al-Bukhárí (in *as-Sahíh,* vol. 4, pp. 166-167, 243), Muslim (*in as-Sahíh,* vol. 3, pp. 109-117), at-Tirmidhí (*in al-Jámi` as-Sahíh,* vol. 4, p. 481), Ibn Májah (in *as-Sunan*, vol. I, pp. 59-62), an-Nasá'í (in *as-Sunan*, vol. 3, pp. 65-66), Málik ibn Anas (in *al-Muwatta'*, pp. 204-205), ad-Dár'qutní (in *as-Sunan*, vol. 3, pp.131-132), ad-Dárimí (in *as-Suman*, vol. 2, p. 133), Abú Dáwúd (in *as-Sunan*, vol. 4, pp. 241-246), al-hákim (in *al-Mustadrak*, vol. 2, pp. 145-154; vol. 4, p. 531), Ahmad ibn Hanbal (in *al-Musnad*, vol. 1, pp. 88, 140, 147; vol. 3, pp. 56, 65) and al-Bayhaqí (*in as-Sunan al-kubrá',* vol. 8, pp. 170-171) have narrated through a group of the companions of the Holy Prophet that he said about Dhu'l-Khuwaysirah (the surname for Dhu'th-Thudayyah Hurqús ibn Zuhayr at-Tamímí, the chief of the Khárijites):

> From this very person's posterity there will arise people who will recite the Qur'án, but it will not go beyond their throat, they will kill their followers of Islam and will spare the idol-worshippers. They will glance through the teaching of Islam as hurriedly as the arrow passes through its prey. If I were to ever find them I would kill them like `Ád.

Then Ibn Abi'l-hadíd continues:

> This is the sign for his (Holy Prophet's) prophethood and his prophecy of the secret knowledge. (*Sharh Nahj al-balághah*, vol. 13, p.183)

(6). By "Satan of the pit" the reference is to Dhu'th-Thudayyah (whose full name already mentioned in footnote no. 5) who was killed in Nahrawán by the stroke of lightning from the sky, and there was no need to kill him by sword. The Holy Prophet had foretold his death. Therefore, after the annihilation of the Khárijites at Nahrawan, Amír al-mu'minín came out in search, but could not find his body anywhere. In the meantime, ar-Rayyán ibn Sabirah saw forty to fifty bodies in a pit on the bank of the canal. When they were taken out the body of Dhu'th-Thudayyah was also found among them. He was called Dhu'th-Thudayyah because of a mass of flesh on his shoulder. When Amír al-mu'minín saw his body he said, "Alláh is Great, neither I spoke lie nor was I told wrong." (Ibn Abi'l-hadíd, vol. 13, pp. 183-184; at-Tabarí, vol 1, pp. 3383-3384; Ibn al-Athír vol. 3, p. 348)

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SERMON 192

It is related that a companion of Amír al-mu'minín called Hammám (1) who was a man devoted to worship said to him, "O' Amír al-mu'minín, describe to me the pious man in such a way as though I see them."

Amír al-mu'minín avoided the reply and said, "O' Hammám, fear Alláh and perform good acts because 'Verily, Alláh is with those who guard (themselves against evil), and those who do good (to others)'" (Qur'án, 16:128). Hammám was not satisfied with this and pushed him to speak. Thereupon, Amír al-mu'minín praised Alláh and extolled Him and sought His blessings on the Holy Prophet and then spoke:

Now then, Alláh the Glorified, the Sublime, created (the things of) creation. He created them without any need for their obedience or being safe from their sinning, because the sin of anyone who sins does not harm Him nor does the obedience of anyone who obeys Him benefit Him. He has distributed among them their livelihood, and has assigned them their positions in the world.

Thus, the God-fearing, in it are the people of distinction. Their speech is to the point, their dress is moderate and their gait is humble. They keep their eyes closed to what Alláh has made unlawful for them, and they put their ears to that knowledge which is beneficial to them. They remain in the time of trials as though they remain in comfort. If there had not been fixed periods (of life) ordained for each, their spirits would not have remained in their bodies even for the twinkling of an eye because of (their) eagerness for the reward and fear of chastisement. The greatness of the Creator is seated in their heart, and, so, everything else appears small in their eyes. Thus to them Paradise is as though they see it and are enjoying its favours. To them, Hell is also as if they see it and are suffering punishment in it.

Their hearts are grieved, they are protected against evils, their bodies are thin, their needs are scanty, and their souls are chaste. They endured (hardship) for a short while, and in consequence they secured comfort for a long time. It is a beneficial transaction that Alláh made easy for them. The world aimed at them, but they did not aim at it. It captured them, but they freed themselves from it by a ransom.

During a night they are upstanding on their feet reading portions of the Qur'án and reciting it in a well-measured way, creating through it grief for themselves and seeking by it the cure for their ailments. If they come across a verse creating eagerness (for Paradise) they pursue it avidly, and their spirits turn towards it eagerly, and they feel as if it is in front of them. And when they come across a verse which contains fear (of Hell) they bend the ears of their hearts towards it, and feel as though the sound of Hell and its cries are reaching their ears. They bend themselves from their backs, prostrate themselves on their foreheads, their palms, their knees and their toes, and beseech Alláh, the Sublime, for their deliverance. During the day they are enduring, learned, virtuous and God-fearing. Fear (of Alláh) has made them thin like arrows. If any one looks at them he believes they are sick, although they are not sick, and he says that they have gone mad. In fact, great concern (i.e., fear) has made them mad.

They are not satisfied with their meagre good acts, and do not regard their major acts as great. They always blame themselves and are afraid of their deeds. When anyone of them is spoken of highly, he says: "I know myself better than others, and my Lord knows me better than I know. O' Alláh do not deal with me according to what they say, and make me better than they think of me and forgive me (those shortcomings) which they do not know."

The peculiarity of anyone of them is that you will see that he has strength in religion, determination along with leniency, faith with conviction, eagerness in (seeking) knowledge in forbearance, moderation in riches, devotion in worship, gracefulness in starvation, endurance in hardship, desire for the lawful, pleasure in guidance and hatred from greed. He performs virtuous deeds but still feels afraid. In the evening he is anxious to offer thanks (to Alláh). In the morning his anxiety is to remember (Alláh). He passes the night in fear and rises in the morning in joy - fear lest night is passed in forgetfulness, and joy over the favour and mercy received by him. If his self refuses to endure a thing which it does not like he does not grant its request towards what it likes. The coolness of his eye lies in what is to last for ever, while from the things (of this world) that will not last he keeps aloof. He transfuses knowledge with forbearance, and speech with action.

You will see his hopes simple, his shortcomings few, his heart fearing, his spirit contented, his meal small and simple, his religion safe, his desires dead and his anger suppressed. Good alone is expected from him. Evil from him is not to be feared. Even if he is found among those who forget (Alláh) he is counted among those who remember (Him), but if he is among the rememberers he is not counted among the forgetful. He forgives him who is unjust to him, and he gives to him who deprives him. He behaves well with him who behaves ill with him.

Indecent speech is far from him, his utterance is lenient, his evils are non-existent his virtues are ever present, his good is ahead and mischief has turned its face (from him). He is dignified during calamities, patient in distresses, and thankful during ease. He does not commit excess over him whom he hates, and does not commit sin for the sake of him whom he loves. He admits truth before evidence is brought against him. He does not misappropriate what is placed in his custody, and does not forget what he is required to remember. He does not call others bad names, he does not cause harm to his neighbour, he does not feel happy at others misfortunes, he does not enter into wrong and does not go out of right.

If he is silent his silence does not grieve him, if he laughs he does not raise his voice, and if he is wronged he endures till Alláh takes revenge on his behalf. His own self is in distress because of him, while the people are in ease from him. He puts himself in hardship for the sake of his next life, and makes people feel safe from himself. His keeping away from others is by way of asceticism and purification, and his nearness to those to whom he is near is by way of leniency and mercifulness. His keeping away is not by way of vanity or feeling of greatness, nor his nearness by way of deceit and cheating.

It is related that Hammám passed into a deep swoon and then expired. Then Amír al-mu'minín said:

Verily, by Alláh I had this fear about him. **Then he added:** Effective advices produce such effects on receptive minds.

Someone (2) **said to him:** O' Amír al-mu'minín, how is it you do not receive such an effect?

Amír al-mu'minín replied: Woe to you. For death there is a fixed hour which cannot be exceeded, and a cause which does not change. Now look, never repeat such talk which Satan had put on your tongue.

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(1). According to Ibn Abi'l-hadíd this is Hammám ibn Shurayh but al-`Allámah al-Majlisí says that apparently this is Hammám ibn `Ubádah.

(2). This man was `Abdulláh ibn al-Kawwá' who was in the fore-front of the Khárijite movement and was a great opponent of Amír al-mu'minín.

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SERMON 193

In description of hypocrites

We praise Alláh for the succour He has given us in carrying out His obedience and in preventing us from disobedience, and we ask Him to complete His favours (to us) and to make us hold on to His rope. We stand witness that Muhammad is His slave and His Messenger. He entered every hardship in search of Alláh's pleasure and endured for its sake every grief. His near relations changed themselves for him and those who were remote from him (in relationship) united against him. The Arabs let loose the reins (of their horses to quicken their march) against him, and struck the bellies of their carriers to (rouse them) in fighting against him, so much so that enemies came to his threshold from the remotest places and most distant areas.

I advise you, O' creatures of Alláh, to fear Alláh and I warn you of the hypocrites, because they are themselves misguided and misguide others, and they have slipped and make others slip too. They change into many colours, and adopt various ways. They support you with all sorts of supports, and lay in waiting for you at every lookout. Their hearts are diseased while their faces are clean. They walk stealthily and tread like the approach of sickness (over the body). Their words speak of cure, but their acts are like incurable diseases. They are jealous of ease, intensify distress, and destroy hopes. Their victims are found lying down on every path, while they have means to approach every heart and they have (false) tears for every grief.

They eulogise each other and expect reward from each other. When they ask something they insist on it, if they reprove (any one) they disgrace (him), and if they pass verdict they commit excess. They have adopted for every truth a wrong way, for every erect thing a bender, for every living being a killer, for every (closed) door a key and for every night a lamp. They covet, but with despair, in order to maintain with it their markets, and to popularise their handsome merchandise. When they speak they create doubts. When they describe they exaggerate. First they offer easy paths but (afterwards) they make them narrow. In short, they are the party of Satan and the stings of fire.

> *Satan hath gained hold on them, so he maketh them forget the remembrance of Alláh; they are Satan's Party; Beware! verily, the party of Satan are the losers.* (Qur'án, 58:19)

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SERMON 194

Alláh's praise, advice about fear of Alláh and details about the Day of Judgement

Praise be to Alláh who has displayed such effects of His authority and the glory of His sublimity through the wonders of His might that they dazzle the pupils of the eyes and prevent the minds from appreciating the reality of His attributes. I stand witness that there is no god but Alláh by virtue of belief, certainty, sincerity and conviction. I also stand witness that Muhammad is His slave and His Prophet whom He deputed when the signs of guidance were obliterated and the ways of religion were desolate. So, he threw open the truth, gave advice to the people, guided them towards righteousness and ordered them to be moderate. May Alláh bless him and his descendants.

Know, O' creatures of Alláh, that He has not created you for nought and has not left you free. He knows the extent of His favours over you and the quantity of His bounty towards you. Therefore, ask Him for success and for the attainment of aims. Beg before Him and seek His generosity. No curtain hides you from Him, nor is any door closed before you against Him. He is at every place, in every moment and every instance. He is with every man and *jinn*. Giving does not create any breach in Him. Gifting does not cause Him diminution. A beggar cannot exhaust Him and paying (to others) cannot take Him to the end.

One person cannot turn His attention from another, one voice does not detract Him from another voice, and one grant of favour does not prevent Him from refusing another favour. Anger does not prevent Him from mercy, mercy does not prevent Him from punishing; His concealment does not hide His manifestness and His manifestness does not prevent Him from concealment. He is near and at the same time distant. He is high and at the same time low. He is manifest and also concealed. He is concealed yet well-known. He lends but is not lent anything. He has not created (the things of) creation after devising, nor did He take their assistance on account of fatigue.

I advise you, O' creatures of Alláh, to have fear of Alláh, for it is the rein and the mainstay (of religion). Hold fast to its salient points, keep hold of its realities. It will take you to abodes of easiness, places of comfort, fortresses of safety and houses of honour on *the Day* (of Judgement) *when eyes will be wide open*, (Qur'án, 14:42), when there will be darkness all round, when small groups of camels pregnant for ten months will be allowed free grazing, and when the Horn will be blown, then every living being will die, every voice will become dumb the high mountains and hard rocks will crumble (to pieces) so that their hard stones will turn into moving sand and their bases will become level. (On that day) there will be no interceder to intercede and no relation to ward off (trouble), and no excuse will be of avail.

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SERMON 195

The condition of the world at the time of the proclamation of prophethood, the transience of this world and the state of its inhabitants.

Alláh deputed the Prophet when no sign of guidance existed, no beacon was giving light and no passage was clear.

I advise you, O' creatures of Alláh, to have fear of Alláh, and I warn you of this world which is a house from which departure is inevitable and a place of discomfort. He who lives in it has to depart, and he who stays here has to leave it. It is drifting with its people like a boat whom severe winds dash (here and there) in the deep sea. Some of them get drowned and die, while some of them escape on the surface of the waves, where winds push them with their currents and carry them towards their dangers. So, whatever is drowned cannot be restored, and whatever escapes is on the way to destruction.

O' creatures of Alláh, you should know now that you have to perform (good) acts, because (at present) your tongues are free, your bodies are healthy, your limbs have movement, the area of your coming and going is vast and the course of your running is wide; before the loss of opportunity or the approach of death. Take death's approach as an accomplished fact and do not think it will come (hereafter).

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SERMON 196

Amír al-mu'minín's attachment to the Holy Prophet. The performance of his funeral rites.

Those companions of Muhammad - the peace and blessing of Alláh be upon him and his descendants - who were the custodians (of divine messages) know that I never disobeyed Alláh or His Messenger (1) - the peace and blessing of Alláh be upon him and his descendants - at all, and by virtue of the courage (2) with which Alláh honoured me I supported him with my life on occasions when even the brave turned away and feet remained behind (instead of proceeding forward).

When the Prophet - the peace and blessing of Alláh be upon him and his descendants - died his head was on my chest, and his (last) breath blew over my palms and I passed it over my face. I performed his (funeral) ablution, may Alláh bless him and his descendants, and the angels helped me. The house and the courtyard were full of them.

One party of them was descending and the other was ascending. My ears continually caught their humming voice, as they invoked Alláh's blessing on him, till we buried him in his grave. Thus, who can have greater rights with him than I during his life or after his death? Therefore depend on your intelligence and make your intentions pure in fighting your enemy, because I swear by Him who is such that there is no god but He, that I am on the path of truth and that they (the enemy) are on the misleading path of wrong. You hear what I say; and I seek Alláh's forgiveness for myself and for you.

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(1). Ibn Abi'l-hadíd has written (*in Sharh Nahj al-balághah*, vol. 10, pp. 180-183) that Amír al-mu'minín's saying that he never disobeyed the commands of the Prophet is a sort of taunt to those who felt no hesitation in rejecting the Prophet's commands and sometimes even checked him. For example, when, at the time of the peace of al-hudaybiyah, the Prophet was agreeable to negotiate peace with the unbelievers among the Quraysh, one of the companions became so enraged that he expressed doubts about the prophethood of the Prophet whereupon Abú Bakr had to say:

> Woe be to you! Keep clinging to him. He is certainly Alláh's Messenger and He will not ruin him.

The introduction to the oath, '*inna*', and the word of emphasis '*lam*' which are used here to create conviction about the prophethood shows that the addressee had gone farther than mere doubt, because these words of emphasis are employed only when the stage of denial has been reached. However, if belief required absence of doubt, the presence of doubt must imply defect in the belief, as Alláh says:

> *The believers are only those who believe in Alláh and His Messenger, they doubt not thereafter,...* (Qur'án, 49:15)

Similarly, when the Prophet intended to say the funeral prayers of Ubayy ibn Salúl the same companion said to him, "How do you intend to seek forgiveness for this Chief of hypocrites?" And he even drew away the Prophet by catching the skirt (of his shirt). Then the Prophet had to say, "No act of mine is beside the command of Alláh". In the same way the Prophet's command to accompany the force of Usámah ibn Zayd was ignored. The greatest of all these insolences was displayed in connection with the Prophet's intention to write down his advice as to when such a blame was laid against the Prophet which proves an absence of belief in the commands of the *sharí`ah*, and creates a doubt about each command as to whether it is based on divine revelation or (Alláh may forbid) just the result of mental disorder.

(2). Who can deny that the ever-successful lion of Alláh, `Alí ibn Abí Tálib (p.b.u.h.) shielded the Prophet on every critical occasion and performed the duty of protecting him by dint of the courage and valour gifted to him by Alláh. The first occasion of risking his life was when the unbelievers from the Quraysh decided finally to kill the Prophet and `Alí slept on his bed surrounded by enemies and under the direct peril of swords, whereby the enemies were not able to succeed in their aims. Then, in those battles where the enemies used to attack the Prophet together and where the feet of even the reputed heroes could not stand firm, Amír al-mu'minín remained steadfast with the banner (of Islam) in his hand. `Abd al-Barr and al-hákim writes about it:

> Ibn `Abbás says that `Alí had four qualities which no one else possessed. Firstly, he was the first among Arabs and non-Arabs to have said prayers with the Messenger of Alláh. Secondly, he always had the banner of Islam

in his hand in every battle. Thirdly, when people ran away from the Prophet, `Alí remained with him; and fourthly it was he who gave the Prophet his funeral ablution and laid him in his grave. (*al-Istí`áb*, vol. 3, p. 1090; *al-Mustadrak `alá as-sahíhayn* vol. 3, p. 111)

A study of the holy wars of Islam fought in the Prophet's days leaves no doubt that, except for the battle of Tabúk in which Amír al-mu'minín did not partake, all other battles bear testimony to his fine performance and all the successes are due to his valour. Thus, in the battle of Badr seventy unbelievers were killed, half of whom were killed by `Alí's sword. In the battle of Uhud, when victory changed into defeat as a result of the Muslims engaging themselves in the collection of booty, and they fled away under the sudden attack of the enemy, Amír al-mu'minín remained steadfast, taking jihad to be a religious obligation, and displayed such conspicuous performance in support and defence of the Prophet that the Prophet too acknowledged it and also the Angel. Again, in the battle of the Trench (al-Khandaq), the Prophet was accompanied by three thousand combatants, but none dared face `Amr ibn `Abdawadd. At last, Amír al-mu'minín killed him and saved the Muslims from ignominy. In the battle of Hunayn, the Muslims were proud of their number because they were ten thousand while the unbelievers were only four thousand, but here too they leapt onto the booty, as a consequence of which the unbelievers gained the opportunity, and pounced upon them. Bewildered with this sudden attack the Muslims fled away as the Holy Qur'án says:

Most certainly did Alláh help you in many (battle) *fields, and on the day of Hunayn, when made you vain your great number, but they availed you nothing, and was straitened the earth against you with all its extensiveness, then ye turned back in retreat.* (9:25)

On this occasion also, Amír al-mu'minín was steady like a rock, and eventually, with Alláh's support, victory was achieved.

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SERMON 197

Alláh’s attribute of Omniscience

Alláh knows the cries of the beasts in the forest, the sins of the people in seclusion, the movements of the fishes in the deep seas and the rising of the water by tempestuous winds. I stand witness that Muhammad is the choice of Alláh, the conveyor of His revelation and the messenger of His mercy.

Advantages of fear of Alláh

Now then, I advise you to fear Alláh, Who created you for the first time; towards Him is your return, with Him lies the success of your aims, at Him terminate (all) your desires, towards Him runs your path of right and He is the aim of your fears (for seeking protection). Certainly, fear of Alláh is the medicine for your hearts, sight for the blindness of your spirits, the cure for the ailments of your bodies, the rectifier of the evils of your breasts, the purifier of the pollution of your minds, the light of the darkness of your eyes, the consolation for the fear of your heart and the brightness for the gloom of your ignorance.

Therefore, make obedience to Alláh the way of your life and not only your outside covering, make it your inner habit instead of only outer routine, subtle enough to enter through your ribs (up to the heart), the guide for all your affairs, the watering place for your getting down (on the Day of Judgement), the interceder for the achievement of your aims, asylum for the day of your fear, the lamp of the interior of your graves, company for your long loneliness, and deliverance from the troubles of your abodes. Certainly, obedience to Alláh is a protection against encircling calamities. expected dangers and the flames of burning fires.

Therefore, whoever entertains fear of Alláh, troubles remain away from him after having been near, affairs become sweet after their bitterness, waves (of troubles) recede from him after having crowded over him, difficulties become easy for him after occurring, generosity rains fast over him after there had been famine, mercy bends over him after it had been loath, the favours (of Alláh) spring forth on him after they had been dried, and blessing descends over him in showers after being scanty. So, fear Alláh Who benefits you with His good advice, preaches to you through His Messenger, and obliges you with His favours. Devote yourselves to His worship, and acquit yourselves of the obligation of obeying Him.

About Islam

This Islam is the religion which Alláh has chosen for Himself, developed it before His eyes, preferred it as the best among His creations, established its pillars on His love. He has disgraced other religions by giving honour to it. He has humiliated all communities before its sublimity; He has humbled its enemies with His kindness and made its opponents lonely by according it His support. He has smashed the pillars of misguidance with its columns. He has quenched the thirst of the thirsty from its cisterns, and filled the cisterns through those who draw its water.

He made Islam such that its constituent parts cannot break, its links cannot separate, its construction cannot fall, its columns cannot decay, its plant cannot be uprooted, its time does not end, its laws do not expire, its twigs cannot be cut, its parts do not become narrow, its ease does not change into difficulty, its clarity is not affected by gloom, its straightness does not acquire curvature, its wood has no crookedness, its vast paths have no narrowness, its lamp knows no putting off and its sweetness has no bitterness.

It consists of columns whose bases Alláh has fixed in truthfulness and whose foundation He has strengthened, and of sources whose streams are ever full of water and of lamps, whose flames are full of light, and of beacons with whose help travellers get guidance, and of signs through which a way is found to its highways and of watering places which provide water to those who come to them. Alláh has placed in Islam the height of His pleasure, the pinnacle of His pillars and the prominence of His obedience. Before Alláh, therefore, its columns are strong, its construction is lofty, its proofs are bright, its fires are aflame, its authority is strong, its beacons are high and its destruction is difficult. You should therefore honour it, follow it, fulfil its obligations and accord the position due to it.

About the Holy Prophet

Then, Alláh, the Glorified, deputed Muhammad - the peace and blessing of Alláh be upon him and his descendants - with truth at a time when the destruction of the world was near and the next life was at hand, when its

brightness was turning into gloom after shining, it had become troublesome for its inhabitants, its surface had become rough, and its decay had approached near. This was during the exhaustion of its life at the approach of signs (of its decay), the ruin of its inhabitants, the breaking of its links, the dispersal of its affairs, the decay of its signs, the divulging of its secret matters and the shortening of its length. Alláh made him responsible for conveying His message and (a means of) honour for his people, a period of bloom for the men of his days, a source of dignity for the supporters and an honour for his helpers.

About the Holy Qur'án

Then, Alláh sent to him the Book as a light whose flames cannot be extinguished, a lamp whose gleam does not die, a sea whose depth cannot be sounded, a way whose direction does not mislead, a ray whose light does not darken, a separator (of good from evil) whose arguments do not weaken, a clarifier whose foundations cannot be dismantled, a cure which leaves no apprehension for disease, an honour whose supporters are not defeated, and a truth whose helpers are not abandoned. Therefore, it is the mine of belief and its centre, the source of knowledge and its oceans, the plantation of justice and its pools, the foundation stone of Islam and its construction, the valleys of truth and its plains, an ocean which those who draw water cannot empty, springs which those who draw water cannot dry up, a watering place which those who come to take water cannot exhaust, a staging place in moving towards which travellers do not get lost, signs which no treader fails to see and a highland which those who approach it cannot surpass it.

Alláh has made it a quencher of the thirst of the learned, a bloom for the hearts of religious jurists, a highway for the ways of the righteous, a cure after which there is no ailment, an effulgence with which there is no darkness, a rope whose grip is strong, a stronghold whose top is invulnerable, an honour for him who loves it, a peace for him who enters it, a guidance for him who follows it, an excuse for him who adopts it, an argument for him who argues with it, a witness for him who quarrels with it, a success for him who argues with it, a carrier of burden for him who seeks the way, a shield for him who arms himself (against misguidance), a knowledge for him who listens carefully, worthy story for him who relates it and a final verdict of him who passes judgements.

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SERMON 198

Containing advice given by Amír al-mu'minín to his companions About Prayer

Pledge yourself with prayer and remain steady on it; offer prayer as much as possible and seek nearness (of Alláh) through it, because it is, (imposed*) upon the believers as* (a) *timed ordinance* (Qur'án 4:103). Have you not heard the reply of the people of Hell when they were asked: *What hath brought you into the hell? They shall say: We were not of those who offered the regular prayers* (to Alláh)*!* (Qur'án, 74:42-43). Certainly, prayer drops out sins like the dropping of leaves (of trees), and removes them as ropes are removed from the necks of cattle. The Messenger of Alláh - the peace and blessing of Alláh he upon him and his descendants - likened it to a hot bath situated at the door of a person who bathes in it five times a day. Will then any dirt remain on him?

Its obligation is recognised by those believers whom neither the adornment of property nor the coolness of the eyes produced by children can turn away from it. Alláh, the Glorified, says:

Men whom neither merchandise nor any sale diverteth from the remembrance of Alláh and constancy in prayer and paying the poor-rate; ... (Qur'án. 24:37)

Even after receiving assurance of Paradise, the Messenger of Alláh - peace and blessing of Alláh be upon him and his descendants - used to exert himself for prayers because of Alláh, the Glorified's command.

And enjoin prayer on thy followers, and adhere thou steadily unto it, ... (Qur'án, 20:132).

Then the Holy Prophet used to enjoin his followers to prayer and exert himself for it.

About the Islamic Tax (zakát)

Then, Islamic tax has been laid down along with prayer as a sacrifice (to be offered) by the people of Islam. Whoever pays it by way of purifying his spirit, it serves as a purifier for him and a protection and shield against fire (of Hell). No one therefore (who pays it) should feel attached to it afterwards, nor should feel grieved over it. Whoever pays it without the intention of purifying his heart expects through it more than its due. He is certainly ignorant of the *sunnah*, he is allowed no reward for it, his action goes to waste and his repentance is excessive.

Fulfilment of Trust

Then, as regards fulfilment of trust, whoever does not pay attention to it will be disappointed. It was placed before the strong skies, vast earths and high mountains but none of them was found to be stronger. vaster, or higher than it. If anything could be unapproachable because of height, vastness, power or strength they would have been unapproachable, but they felt afraid of the evil consequences (of failure in fulfilling a trust) and noticed what a weaker being did not realise it, and this was man.

. . . Verily he was (proved) *unjust, ignorant.* (Qur'án, 33:72)

Surely, Alláh, the Glorified, the Sublime, nothing is hidden from Him of whatever people do in their nights or days. He knows all the details, and His knowledge covers them. Your limbs are a witness, the organs of your body constitute an army (against yourself), your inner self serves Him as eyes (to watch your sins), and your loneliness is open to Him.

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SERMON 199

Treason and treachery of Mu`áwiyah and the fate of those guilty of treason

By Alláh, (1) Mu`áwiyah is not more cunning than I am, but he deceives and commits evil deeds. Had I not been hateful of deceit I would have been the most cunning of all men. But (the fact is that) every deceit is a sin and every sin is disobedience (of Alláh), and every deceitful person will have a banner by which he will be recognised on the Day of Judgement. By Alláh, I cannot be made forgetful by strategy, nor can I be overpowered by hardships.

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(1). People who are ignorant of religion and ethics free from the shackles of religious law and unaware of the conception of punishment and reward find no paucity of excuses and means for the achievement of their objects. They can find ways of success at every stage; but when the dictates of humanity, or Islam, or the limitations imposed by ethics and religious law act as impediments, the chances of devising and finding means become narrow, and the possibility of action becomes restricted. Mu`áwiyah's influence and control was the result of these devices and ways in following which he knew no impediment nor any obstacle of what is lawful or unlawful, nor did fear of the Day of Judgement prevent him from acting fearlessly. As al-`Allámah ar-Ràghib al-Isfahání while taking account of his characters writes:

"His aim always was to achieve his object whether lawful or unlawful. He did not care for religion nor did he ever think of divine chastisement. Thus, in order to maintain his power he resorted to mis-statements and concoctions, practised all sorts of deceits and contrivances. When he saw that success was not possible without entangling Amír al-mu'minín in war he roused Talhah and az-Zubayr against him. When success could not be achieved by this means he instigated the Syrians and brought about the civil war of Siffín. And when his rebellious position had become known by the killing of `Ammár, he at once duped the people by saying that `Alí was responsible for killing him as he had brought him into the battlefield; and on another occasion he interpreted the words 'rebellious party' occurring in the saying of the Prophet to mean 'avenging party' intending to prove that `Ammár would be killed by the group that would seek revenge of `Uthmán's blood, although the next portion of this saying namely 'he will call them towards Paradise while they will call him to Hell,' does not leave any scope for interpretation. When there was no hope of victory even by these cunning means, he contrived to raise the Qur'án on spears, although in his view neither the Qur'án nor its commandments carried any weight. If he had really aimed at a decision by the Qur'án, he should have put this demand before the commencement of the battle, and when it became known to him that the decision had been secured by `Amr ibn al-`ÁS by deceiving Abú Músá al-Ash`arí, and that it did not have even a remote connection with the Qur'án, he should not have accepted it and should have punished `Amr ibn al-`ÁS for this cunning, or at least should have warned and rebuked him. But on the contrary, his performance was much appreciated and in reward he was made the Governor of Egypt."

In contrast to this Amír al-mu'minín's conduct was a high specimen of religious law and ethics. He kept in view the requirements of truth and righteousness even in adverse circumstances and did not allow his chaste life to be tarnished by the views of deceit and contrivance. If he wished he could face cunning by cunning, and Mu`áwiyah's shameful activities could have been answered by similar activities. For example, when he put a guard on the Euphrates and stopped the supply of its water (to Amír al-mu'minín's men), then the supply of water could have been cut from them also on the grounds that since they had occupied the Euphrates it was lawful to retaliate, and in this way they could be overpowered by weakening their fighting power. But Amír al-mu'minín could never tarnish his hands with such an inhuman act which was not permitted by any law or code of ethics, although common people regard such acts against the enemy as lawful and call this duplicity of character for achievement of success, a stroke of policy and administrative ability. But Amír al-mu'minín could never think of strengthening his power by fraud or duplicity of behaviour on any occasion. Thus when people advised him to retain the officers of the days of `Uthmán in their position and to befriend Talhah and az-Zubayr by assigning them governorship of Kúfah and Basrah, and make use of Mu`áwiyah's ability in administration by giving him the government of Syria, Amír al-mu'minín rejected the advice and preferred the commandments of religious law over worldly expediency, and openly declared about Mu`áwiyah as follows:

If I allow Mu`áwiyah to retain what he already has I would be *one "who taketh those who lead* (people) *astray, as helpers"* (Qur'án, 18:51). Those who look at apparent successes do not care to find out by what means the success has been achieved. They support anyone whom they see succeeding by means of cunning ways and deceitful means and begin to regard him an administrator, intelligent, a politician, intellectually brilliant and so on, while he who does

not deploy cunning and fraudulent methods owing to his adherence to Islamic commandments and divine instructions and prefers failure to success secured through wrong methods is regarded as ignorant of politics and weak in foresight. They do not feel it necessary to think what difficulties and impediments exist in the way of a person who adheres to principles and laws which prevent him from proceeding forward even after approaching near success."

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SERMON 200

One should not be afraid of the scarcity of those who tread on the right path

O' people, do not wonder at the small number of those who follow the right path, because people throng only round the table (of this world) whose edibles are few but whose hunger is insatiable.

O' people, certainly, what gathers people together (in categories) is (their) agreement (to good or bad) and (their) disagreement, for only one individual killed the camel of Thamúd (1) but Alláh held all of them in punishment because all of them joined him by their acquiescing in their consenting to it. Thus, Alláh, the Glorified. has said:

Then they hamstrung her, and turned (themselves) *regretful.* (Qur'án, 26:157).

Then their land declined by sinking (into the earth) as the spike of a plough pierces unploughed weak land. O' people, he who treads the clear path (of guidance) reaches the spring of water, and whoever abandons it strays into waterless desert.

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(1). Thamúd, in ancient Arabia, a tribe or group of tribes, seems to have been prominent from about the 4th Century B.C. to the first half of the 7th Century A.D. Their place of stay and homeland was at a place lying on the way between the Hijáz and Syria called the Valley of al-Qurá and bore this name because it consisted of several townships. Alláh deputed for their guidance and directions the Prophet Sálih who preached to them as Alláh relates in his story:

And unto (the people of) *Thamúd* (We did send) *their brother Sálih, he said: "O' my people! worship ye Alláh* (alone). *Ye have no god other than Him; indeed came unto you a clear proof from your Lord; this is the She-camel of Alláh* (which) *unto you is a sign, so leave it* (free) *to pasture in Alláh's earth and touch her not with any harm, or ye shall be seized with a painful chastisement. And remember when He made you successors after the* (people) *`Ád and settled you in the earth, ye build mansions on its plain and hew the mountains into dwellings. So remember ye the bounties of Alláh, and see ye not evil in the earth, making mischief." Said the chiefs of those who were puffed up with pride among his people to those who were reckoned weak, to those who believed from among them; "Know ye that Sálih is sent by his Lord?" Said they: "Verily, in what he hath been sent with, we are believers." Said those who were puffed up with pride; "Verily we, in that which ye believe are disbelievers." They hamstrung the She-camel and rebelled against the command of their Lord, and they said: "O' Sálih! bring us what thou didst, threaten us with, if thou art of the apostles." Then seized them* (unawares) *the earthquake, so became they in their dwellings, motionless* (dead). *Then he turned away from them and said: "O' my people! Indeed I did deliver unto you the message of my Lord, and did admonish you, but ye love not the admonishers."* (Qur'án, 7:73-79).

(The people of) *Thamúd belied the warners, and said they: "What! a single man, from among us! and we to follow him? Verily then we shall be astray and in distress. It is that* (the duty of) *reminding hath been bestowed on him* (alone), *of all the* (people) *among us? Nay! he is a great liar, an insolent one!" "Soon they shall know on the morrow,* (as to) *who is the liar, the insolent one!* (O' Our Apostle Sálih!) *verily We are going to send the She-camel as a trial for them; so watch them and be patient. And* (thou O' Sálih!) *make them aware* (beforehand) *that the water is* (to be) *divided between them; and every drinking share shall be witnessed* (on it)*." But they called their companions, then he pursued* (her) *and hamstrung* (her). *How* (great) *was My chastisement and My warning? Verily sent We upon them a single* (violent) *blast, and they were* (all) *like the dry stubble used by a fencer in a fence.* (Qur'án, 54:23-31).

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SERMON 201

What Amír al-mu'minín said on the occasion of the burial of Sayyidatu'n-nisá' (Supreme lady) Fátimah (p.b.u.h.) while addressing the Holy Prophet at his grave.

O' Prophet of Alláh, peace be upon you from me and from your daughter who has come to you and who has hastened to meet you. O' Prophet of Alláh, my patience about your chosen (daughter) has been exhausted, and my power of endurance has weakened, except that I have ground for consolation in having endured the great hardship and heart-rending event of your separation. I laid you down in your grave when your last breath had passed (when your head was) between my neck and chest.

... Verily we are Alláh's and verily unto Him shall we return. (Qur'án 2:156)

Now. the trust has been returned and what had been given has been taken back. As to my grief, it knows no bounds, and as to my nights. they will remain sleepless till Alláh chooses for me the house in which you are now residing.

Certainly, your daughter would apprise you of the joining together of your (1) *ummah* (people) for oppressing her. You ask her in detail and get all the news about the position. This has happened when a long time had not elapsed and your remembrance had not disappeared. My *salám* (salutation) be on you both, the *salám* of a grief stricken not a disgusted or hateful person; for if I go away it is not because I am weary (of you), and if I stay it is not due to lack of belief in what Alláh has promised the endurers.

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(1). The treatment meted out to the daughter of the Prophet after his death was extremely painful and sad. Although Sayyidatu'n-nisá' Fátimah (p.b.u.h.) did not live in this world more than a few months after the death of the Prophet yet even this short period has a long tale of grief and woe (about her). In this connection, the first scene that strikes the eyes is that arrangements for the funeral rites of the Prophet had not yet been made when the contest for power started in the Saqífah of Banú Sa`ídah. Naturally, their leaving the body of the Prophet (without burial) must have injured Sayyidatu'n-nisá' Fátimah's grief-stricken heart when she saw that those who had claimed love and attachment (with the Prophet) during his life became so engrossed in their machinations for power that instead of consoling his only daughter they did not even know when the Prophet was given a funeral ablution and when he was buried, and the way they condoled her was that they crowded at her house with material to set fire to it and tried to secure allegiance by force with all the display of oppression, compulsion and violence. All these excesses were with a view to so obliterate the prestigious position of this house that it might not regain its lost prestige on any occasion. With this aim in view, in order to crush her economic position, her claim for (the estate of) Fadak was turned down by dubbing it as false, the effect of which was that Sayyidatu'n-nisá' Fátimah (p.b.u.h.) made the dying will that none of them should attend her funeral.

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SERMON 202

Transience of this world, and importance of collecting provisions for the next life.

O' people, certainly this world is a passage while the next world is a place of permanent abode. So, take from the passage (all that you can) for the permanent abode. Do not tear away your curtain before Him Who is aware of your secrets. Take away from this world your hearts before your bodies go out of it, because herein you have been put on trial, and you have been created for the other world. When a man dies people ask what (property) he has left while the angels ask what (good actions) he has sent forward. May Alláh bless you; send forward something, it will be a loan for you, and do not leave everything behind, for that would be a burden on you.

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SERMON 203

What Amír al-mu'minín said generally to his companions warning them about the dangers of the Day of Judgement.

May Alláh have mercy on you! Provide yourselves for the journey because the call for departure has been announced. Regard your stay in the world as very short, and return (to Alláh) with the best provision that is with you, because surely, in front of you lies a valley, difficult to climb, and places of stay full of fear and dangers. You have to reach there and stay in them. And know that the eyes of death are approaching towards you. It is as though you are (already) in its talons and it has struck itself against you. Difficult affairs and distressing dangers have crushed you into it. You should therefore cut away all the attachments of this world and assist yourselves with the provision of Alláh's fear.

as-Sayyid ar-Radí says: A part of this saying has been quoted before through another narration.

SERMON 204

After swearing allegiance to Amír al-mu'minín, Talhah **and az-Zubayr complained to him that he had not consulted them or sought their assistance in the affairs (of state). Amír al-mu'minín replied:**

Both of you frown over a small matter and leave aside big ones. Can you tell me of anything wherein you have a right of which I have deprived you or a share which was due to you and which I have held away from you, or any Muslim who has laid any claim before me and I have been unable to decide it or been ignorant of it, or committed a mistake about it?

By Alláh, I had no liking for the caliphate nor any interest in government, but you yourselves invited me to it and prepared me for it. When the caliphate came to me, I kept the Book of Alláh in my view and all that Alláh had put therein for us, and all that according to which He has commanded us to take decisions; and I followed it, and also acted on whatever the Prophet - may Alláh bless him and his descendants - had laid down as his *sunnah*. In this matter I did not need your advice or the advice of anyone else, nor has there been any order of which I was ignorant so that I ought to have consulted you or my Muslim brethren. If it were so I would not have turned away from you or from others.

As regards your reference to the question of equality (in distribution of shares from the Muslim common fund), this is a matter in which I have not taken a decision by my own opinion, nor have I done it by my caprice. But I found, and you too (must have) found, that whatever the Prophet - may Alláh bless him and his descendants - brought had been finalised. Therefore, I felt no need to turn towards you about a share which had been determined by Alláh and in which His verdict has been passed. By Alláh, in this matter, therefore, you two or anyone else can have no favour from me. May Alláh keep our hearts and your hearts in righteousness, and may He grant us and you endurance.

Then Amír al-mu'minín added: May Alláh have mercy on the person who, when he sees the truth, supports it, when he sees the wrong, rejects it, and who helps the truth against him who is on the wrong.

SERMON 205

During the battle of Siffín Amír al-mu'minín heard some of his men abusing the Syrians, then he said:

I dislike you starting to abuse them, but if you describe their deeds and recount their situations that would be a better mode of speaking and a more convincing way of arguing. Instead of abusing them you should say, "O' Alláh! save our blood and their blood, produce reconciliation between us and them, and lead them out of their misguidance so that he who is ignorant of the truth may know it, and he who inclines towards rebellion and revolt may turn away from it."

SERMON 206

In the battle of Siffín Amír al-mu'minín saw Imám al-hasan proceeding rapidly to fight, then he said:

Hold back this young man on my behalf, lest he causes my ruin, because I am loath to send these two (meaning al-hasan and al-husayn) towards death, lest the descending line of the Prophet - may Alláh bless him and his descendants - is cut away by their death.

as-Sayyid ar-Radí says: Amír al-mu'minín's words "*amlikú `anní hádha'l- ghulám*" (i.e. "Hold back this young man on my behalf") represents the highest and the most eloquent form of expression.

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SERMON 207

When Amír al-mu'minín's companions expressed displeasure about his attitude concerning Arbitration, (1) he said:

O' people, matters between me and you went as I wished till war exhausted you. By Alláh, it has overtaken some of you and left others, and has completely weakened your enemy. Till yesterday I was giving orders but today I am being given orders, and till yesterday I was dissuading people (from wrong acts) but today I am being dissuaded. You have now shown liking to live in this world, and it is not for me to bring you to what you dislike.

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(1). When the surviving forces of the Syrians lost ground and were ready to run away from the field Mu`áwiyah changed the whole phase of the battle by using the Qur'án as his instrument of strategy, and succeeded in creating such a division among the Iraqis that, despite Amír al-mu'minín's efforts at counselling, they were not prepared to take any forward step, but insisted on stopping the war, whereupon Amír al-mu'minín too had to agree to arbitration. Among these people some had actually been duped and believed that they were being asked to abide by the Qur'án but there were others who had become weary of the long period of war and had lost courage. Then people got a good opportunity to stop the war, and so they cried hoarse for its postponement. There were others who had accompanied Amír al-mu'minín because of his temporal authority but did not support him by heart, nor did they aim at victory for him. There were some people who had expectations with Mu`áwiyah, and had started attaching hopes to him for this, while there were some who were, from the very beginning, in league with him. In these circumstances and with this type of the army it was really due to Amír al-mu'minín's political ability and competence of military control and administration that he carried the war up to this stage, and if Mu`áwiyah had not adopted this trick there could have been no doubt in Amír al-mu'minín's victory because the military power of the Syrian forces had been exhausted and defeat was hovering over its head. In this connection, Ibn Abi'l-hadíd writes:

> Málik al-Ashtar had reached Mu`áwiyah and grabbed him by the neck. The entire might of the Syrians had been smashed. Only so much movement was discernible in them as remains in the tail of a lizard which is killed, but the tail continues hopping right and left. (Sharh Nahj al-balághah, vol. 11, pp.30-31)

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SERMON 208

Amír al-mu'minín went to enquire about the health of his companion al-`Alá' ibn Ziyád al-hárithí and when he noticed the vastness of his house he said:

What will you do with this vast house in this world, although you need this house more in the next world. If you want to take it to the next world you could entertain in it guests and be regardful of kinship and discharge all (your) obligations according to their accrual. In this way you will be able to take it to the next world.

**Then al-`Alá' said to him:** O' Amír al-mu'minín, I want to complain to you about my brother `ÁSim ibn Ziyád.

Amír al-mu'minín enquired: What is the matter with him?

al-`Alá' said: He has put on a woollen coat and cut himself away from the world.

Amír al-mu'minín said: Present him to me.

When he came Amír al-mu'minín said: O' enemy of yourself. Certainly, the evil (Satan) has misguided you. Do you feel no pity for your wife and your children? Do you believe that if you use those things which Alláh has made lawful for you, He will dislike you? You are too unimportant for Alláh to do so.

He said: O' Amír al-mu'minín, you also put on coarse dress and eat rough food.

Then he replied: Woe be to you, I am not like you. Certainly, Alláh, the Sublime, has made it obligatory on true leaders that they should maintain themselves at the level of low people so that the poor do not cry over their poverty. (1)

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(1). From ancient days asceticism and the abandonment of worldly attachments has been regarded as a means of purification of the spirit and important for the character. Consequently, those who wished to lead a life of abstemiousness and meditation used to go out of the cities and towns to stay in forests and caves in the mountains and stay there concentrating on Alláh according to their own conception. They would eat only if a casual traveller or the inhabitant of nearby dwellings gave them anything to eat, otherwise they remained contented with the fruits of wild trees and the water of the streams, and thus they passed their life. This way of worship commenced in a way that was forced by the oppression and hardships of rulers. Certain people left their houses and, in order to avoid their grip, hid themselves in some wilderness or cave in a mountain, engaging themselves in worship of and devotion to Alláh. Later on, this forced asceticism acquired a voluntary form and people began to retire to caves and hollows of their own volition. Thus it became an accepted way that whoever aimed at spiritual development retired to some corner after severing himself from all worldly ties. This method remained in vogue for centuries and even now some traces of this way of worship are found among the Buddhists and the Christians.

The moderate views of Islam do not, however, accord with the monastic life, because for attaining spiritual development it does not advocate the abandonment of worldly enjoyments and successes, nor does it view with approbation that a Muslim should leave his house and fellow men and busy himself in formal worship, hiding in some corner. The conception of worship in Islam is not confined to a few particular rites, but it regards the earning of one's livelihood through lawful means, mutual sympathy and good behaviour, and co-operation and assistance also to be important constituents of worship. If an individual ignores worldly rights and obligations and does not fulfil his responsibility towards his wife and children, nor occupies himself in efforts to earn a livelihood, but all the time stays in meditation, he ruins his life and does not fulfil the purpose of living. If this were Alláh's aim, what would have the need for creating and populating the world when there was already a category of creatures who were all the time engaged in worshipping and adoration.

Nature has made man to stand on the cross-roads at which the midway is the centre of guidance. If he deviates from this point of moderateness even a bit, this way or that way, there is shear misguidance for him. That midway is that he should neither bend towards this world to such an extent as to ignore the next life, devoting himself entirely to this one, nor should he abstain from this world so as not to have any connection with anything of it,

confining himself to some corner leaving everything else. Since Alláh has created man in this world he should follow the code of life for living in this world, and should partake of the comforts and pleasures bestowed by Alláh within moderate limits. The eating and using of things made lawful by Alláh is not against Alláh's worship, but rather Alláh has created these things for the very purpose that they should be taken advantage of. That is why those who were the chosen of Alláh lived in this world with others and ate and drank like others. They did not feel the need to turn their faces away from the people of the world, and to adopt the wilderness or the caves of mountains as their abodes, or to live in distant spots. On the other hand they remembered Alláh, remained disentangled from worldly affairs, and did not forget death despite the pleasures and comforts of life.

The life of asceticism sometimes produces such evils as ruin the next life also as well as this one, and such an individual proves to be the true picture of "the looser in this life as well as the next." When natural impulses are not satisfied in the lawful and legal way the mind turns into a centre of evil-ideas and becomes incapable of performing worship with peace and concentration; and sometimes passions so overcome the ascetic that breaking all moral fetters, he devotes himself completely to their satisfaction and consequently falls in an abyss of ruin for which it is impossible to extract himself. That is why religious law accords a greater position to the worship performed by a family man than that by a non-family man, because the former can exercise mental peace and concentration in the worship and rituals.

Individuals who put on the cloak of Sufism and make a loud show of their spiritual greatness are cut off from the path of Islam and are ignorant of its wide teachings. They have been misled by Satan and, relying on their self-formed conceptions, tread wrongful paths. Eventually their misguidance becomes so serious that they begin to regard their leaders as having attained such a level that their word is as the word of Alláh and their act is as the act of Alláh. Sometimes they regard themselves beyond all the bounds and limitations of religious law and consider every evil act to be lawful for them. This deviation from faith and irreligiousness is named Sufism (complete devotion to Alláh). Its unlawful principles are called *"at-taríqah"* (ways of achieving communion with Alláh) and the followers of this cult are known as Sufis. First of all Abú Háshim al-Kúfí and Shámí adopted this nickname. He was of Umayyad descent and a fatalist (believing that man is bound to act as pre-ordained by Alláh). The reason for giving him this name was that, in order to make a show of his asceticism and fear for Alláh, he put on a woollen cloak. Later on this nickname became common and various grounds were put forth as the basis of this name. For example, one ground is that 'Sufi' has three letters, *"sád", "wáw"* and *"fá'". "sád"* stands for *"sabr"* (endurance), *"sidq"* (truthfulness) and *"safá"* (purity of heart); *"wáw"* stands for *"wudd"* (love), *"wird"* (repeating Alláh's name) and *"wafá'"* (faithfulness to Alláh), and *"fá'"* stands for *"fard"* (unity), *"faqr"* (destitution) and *"fana'"* (death or absorption in Alláh's Self). The second view is that it has been derived from *"as-Suffah",* which was a platform near the Prophet's mosque which had a covering of date-palm leaves. Those who stayed there were called *Ashábu'Suffah* (people of the platform). The third view is that the name of the progenitor of an Arab tribe was Súfah, and this tribe performed the duties of serving the pilgrims and the Ka`bah, and it is with reference to their connection with this tribe that these people were called Sufis. This group is divided among various sects but the basic sects are seven only.

1) al-Wahdatiyyah (unitarian): This sect believes in the oneness of all existence. Its belief is that everything of this world is Alláh, so much so that they assign to even polluted things the same godly position. They liken Alláh with the river and the waves rising in it, and argue that the waves which sometimes rise and sometimes fall have no separate existence other than the river, but their existence is exactly the existence of the river. Therefore, nothing can be separated from its own existence.

2) al-Ittihádiyyah (the unitists): They believe that they have united with Alláh and Alláh has united with them. They liken Alláh with fire and themselves with iron that lies in the fire and acquires its form and property.

3) al-h**ulúliyyah** (the formists): Their belief is that Alláh takes the form of those who claim to know Him and the perfect ones, and their bodies are places of His stay. In this way, they are seemingly men but really Alláh.

4) al-WÁs**iliyyah** (the combiners): This sect considers itself to have combined with Alláh. Their belief is that the laws of the *sharí`ah* are a means of development of human personality and character, and that when the human self combines with Alláh it no more needs perfection or development. Consequently, for the *"wÁsilín",* worship and ritual become useless, because they hold that when truth and reality is achieved *sharí`ah* remains of no avail. Therefore, they can do anything and they cannot be questioned.

5) az-Zarráqiyyah (the revellers): This sect regards vocal and instrumental music as worship, and earns the pleasures of this world through a show of asceticism and begging from door to door. They are ever engaged in relating concocted stories of miraculous performances of their leaders to over-awe the common people.

6) al-`Ushsháqiyyah (the lovers): The theory of this sect is that apparency is the means to reality, meaning that carnal love is the means to achieve love of Alláh. That is, in order to reach the stage of Alláh's love it is necessary to have love with some human beauty. But the love which they regard as love for Alláh is just the product of mental disorder through which the lover inclines to one individual with all his attention and his final aim is to have access to the beloved. This love can lead to the way of evil and vice, but it has no connection with the love of Alláh.

A Persian couplet says:

The truth of the fact is that carnal love is like a jinn and a jinn cannot give you guidance.

7) at-Talqíniyyah (the encounterers): According to this sect, the reading of religious sciences and books of scholarship is thoroughly unlawful. Rather, the position that is achieved by an hour of spiritual effort of the Sufis cannot be achieved by seventy years of reading books.

According to Shí`ah `Ulamá' all these sects are on the wrong path and out of the fold of Islam. In this connection, numerous sayings of the Imáms are related. In this sermon also Amír al-mu'minín has regarded the severance of `ÁSim ibn Ziyád from this world as the mischief of Satan, and he forcefully dissuaded him from adopting that course. (For further study, see Sharh Nahj al-balághah, al-Hajj Mirzá Habibu'lláh al-Khú'í, vol. 13, pp. 132-417; vol. 14, pp. 2-22).

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SERMON 209

Someone (1) asked Amír al-mu'minín about concocted traditions and contradictory sayings of the Prophet current among the people, whereupon he said:

Certainly what is current among the people is both right and wrong, true and false, repealing and repealed, general and particular, definite and indefinite, exact and surmised. Even during the Prophet's days false sayings had been attributed to him, so much so that he had to say during his sermon that, "Whoever attributes falsehoods to me makes his abode in Hell." Those who relate traditions are of four categories, (2) no more.

First: The lying hypocrites

The hypocrite is a person who makes a show of faith and adopts the appearance of a Muslim; he does not hesitate in sinning nor does he keep aloof from vice; he wilfully attributes false things against the Messenger of Alláh - may Alláh bless him and his descendants. If people knew that he was a hypocrite and a liar, they would not accept anything from him and would not confirm what he says.

Rather they say that he is the companion of the Prophet, has met him, heard (his sayings) from him and acquired (knowledge) from him. They therefore accept what he says. Alláh too had warned you well about the hypocrites and described them fully to you. They have continued after the Holy Prophet. They gained positions with the leaders of misguidance and callers towards Hell through falsehoods and slanderings. So, they put them in high posts and made them officers over the heads of the people, and amassed wealth through them. People are always with the rulers and after this world, except those to whom Alláh affords protection. This is the first of the four categories.

Second: Those who are mistaken

Then there is the individual who heard (a saying) from the Holy Prophet but did not memorise it as it was, but surmised it. He does not lie wilfully. Now, he carries the saying with him and relates it, acts upon it and claims that: "I heard it from the Messenger of Alláh." If the Muslims come to know that he has committed a mistake in it, they will not accept it from him, and if he himself knows that he is on the wrong he will give it up.

Third: Those who are ignorant

The third man is he who heard the Prophet ordering to do a thing and later the Prophet refrained the people from doing it, but this man did not know it, or he heard the Prophet refraining people from a thing and later he allowed it, but this man did not know it. In this way he retained in his mind what had been repealed, and did not retain the repealing tradition. If he knew that it had been repealed he would reject it, or if the Muslims knew, when they heard it from him, that it had been repealed they would reject it.

Fourth: Those who memorise truthfully

The last, namely the fourth man, is he who does not speak a lie against Alláh or against His Prophet. He hates falsehood out of fear for Alláh and respect for the Messenger of Alláh, and does not commit mistakes, but retains (in his mind) exactly what he heard (from the Prophet), and he relates it as he heard it without adding anything or omitting anything. He heard the repealing tradition, he retained it and acted upon it, and he heard the repealed tradition and rejected it. He also understands the particular and the general, and he knows the definite and indefinite, and gives everything its due position.

The sayings of the Prophet used to be of two types. One was particular and the other common. Sometimes a man would hear him but he would not know what Alláh, the Glorified, meant by it or what the Messenger of Alláh meant by it. In this way the listener carries it and memorises it without knowing its meaning and its real intention, or what was its reason. Among the companions of the Messenger of Alláh all were not in the habit of putting him questions and ask him the meanings, indeed they always wished that some Bedouin or stranger might come and ask him (peace be upon him) so that they would also listen. Whenever any such thing came before me, I asked him about its meaning and preserved it. These are the reasons and grounds of differences among the people in their traditions.

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(1). This was Sulaym ibn Qays al-Hilálí who was one of the relaters of traditions through Amír al-mu'minín.

(2). In this sermon Amír al-mu'minín has divided the traditionists into four categories.

The first category is that of a man concocts a tradition and attributes it to the Prophet. Traditions were in fact falsified and attributed to him, and this process continued, with the result that numerous novel traditions came into being. This is a fact which cannot be denied but if anyone does deny it his basis would be not knowledge or sagacity by oratory or argumentative necessity. Thus, once, `Alamu'l-hudá (Ensign of Guidance) as-Sayyid al-Murta_á had a chance of meeting the Sunni *`ulamá'* (scholars) in confrontation and on this occasion as-Sayyid al-Murta_á proved by historical facts that the traditions related about the merits of the great companions are concocted and counterfeit. On this, the (Sunni) *`ulamá'* argued that it was impossible that someone should dare speak a lie against the Prophet and prepare a tradition himself and attribute it to him. as-Sayyid al-Murta_á said there is a tradition of the Prophet that:

> A lot of false things will be attributed to me after my death and whoever speaks a lie against me would be preparing his abode in Hell. (al-Bukhárí, vol.1, p.38; vol.2, p.102; vol.4, p.207; vol.8, p.54; Muslim, vol.8, p.229; Abú Dáwúd, vol.3, pp.319-320; at-Tirmidhí, vol.4, p.524; vol.5, pp.35-36, 40, 199, 634; Ibn Májah, vol.1, pp.13-15)

If you regard this tradition as true then you should agree that false things have been attributed to the Prophet, but if you regard it false, this would prove our point. However, these were people whose hearts were full of hypocrisy and who used to prepare traditions of their own accord in order to create mischief and dispersion in religion and to misguide Muslims of weak convictions. They remained mixed with them as they used to do during the lifetime of the Prophet; and just as they remained busy in activities of mischief and destruction in those days, in the same way, even after the Prophet, they were not unmindful of deforming the teachings of Islam and metamorphosing its features. Rather, in the days of the Prophet they were always afraid lest he unveiled them and put them to shame, but after the Prophet their hypocritical activities increased and they attributed false things to the Prophet without demur for their own personal ends, and those who heard them believed in them because of their status as companions of the Prophet, thinking that whatever they said was correct and whatever they gave out was true. Afterwards also, the belief that all the companions are correct put a stopper on their tongues, as a result of which they were taken to be above criticism, questioning, discussion and censure. Besides, their conspicuous performance had made them prominent in the eyes of the government, and also because of this it needed courage and daring to speak against them. This is proved by Amír al-mu'minín's words:

> These people gained positions with the leaders of misguidance and callers towards Hell, through falsehood and slanderings. So, they put them in high posts and made them officers over the heads of the people.

Along with the destruction of Islam, the hypocrites also aimed at amassing wealth, and they were doing so freely by claiming to be Muslims, because of which they did not want to remove the veil of Islam (from their faces) and to come out openly, but they wanted to continue their Satanic activities under the garb of Islam and engaged themselves in its basic destruction and spreading of division and dispersal by concocting traditions. In this connection, Ibn Abi'l-hadíd has written:

> When they were left free they too left many things. When people observed silence about them they also observed silence about Islam, but they continued their underground activities such as the fabrication of falsehoods to which Amír al-mu'minín has alluded, because a lot of untrue matters had been mixed with the traditions by the group of people of wrong beliefs, while some of them also aimed at extolling some particular party with whom they had other worldly aims as well.

On the expiry of this period, when Mu`áwiyah took over the leadership of religion and occupied the throne of temporal authority, he opened an official department for the fabrication of false traditions, and ordered his officers to fabricate and popularise traditions in disparagement of the *Ahlu'l-bayt* (the Household of the Holy Prophet) and in extolment of `Uthmán and the Umayyads, and announced rewards and grants of land for this work. Consequently, a lot of traditions about self-made distinctions gained entry in the books of traditions. Thus, Abu'l-Hasan al-Madá'iní has written in his book *Kitáb al-ahdáth* and Ibn Abi'l-hadíd has quoted it, namely:

> Mu`áwiyah wrote to his officers that they should take special care of those who were adherents of `Uthmán, his well-wishers and lovers and to award high positions, precedence and honour to those who related traditions about his merits and distinctions, and to convey to him whatever is so related by any person, along with his name, the name of his father and the name of his tribe. They did accordingly and heaped up traditions

about the merits and distinctions of `Uthmán because Mu`áwiyah used to award them rewards, clothes, grants and lands.

When the fabricated traditions about the merits of `Uthmán had been spread throughout the realm, with the idea that the position of the earlier Caliphs should not remain low, Mu`áwiyah wrote to his officers:

> As soon as you receive this order of mine you should call upon the people to prepare traditions about the distinctions of the companions and other caliphs also, and take care that if any Muslim relates any tradition about Abú Turáb (`Alí) you should prepare a similar tradition about the companions to contradict it because this gives me great pleasure and cools my eyes, and it weakens the position of Abu Turáb and his partymen. and is more severe to them than the merits and distinctions of `Uthmán.

When his letters were read to the people, a large number of such traditions were related extolling the companions that are all fabricated with no truth at all. *(Sharh Nahj al-balághah, vol. 11, pp. 43-47)*

In this connection Abú `Abdilláh Ibráhím ibn Muhammad ibn `Arafah known as Niftawayh (244/858-323/935) who was one of the prominent scholars and traditionists has written, and Ibn Abi'l-hadíd has quoted him, that:

> Most of the false traditions about the merits of the companions were fabricated during the days of Mu`áwiyah in order to gain position in his audience because his view was that in this way he could disgrace Banú Háshim and render them low. *(ibid.)*

After that, fabrication of traditions became a habit, the world seekers made it a means of securing position with kings and nobles and to amass wealth. For example, Ghiyáth ibn Ibráhím an-Nakha`í (2nd cent. A.H.) fabricated a tradition about the flight of pigeons, in order to please al-Mahdí ibn al-Mansúr (the `Abbásid Caliph) and to secure position near him. (*Táríkh Baghdád*, vol.12, pp.323-327; *Mízán al-i`tidál*, vol.3) pp.337-338; *Lisán al-mízán*, vol.4, p.422). Abu Sa`íd al-Madá'iní and others made it a means of livelihood. The limit was reached when the al-Karrámiyyah and some of the al-Mutasawwifah gave the ruling that the fabrication of traditions for the prevention of sin or for persuasion towards obedience was lawful. Consequently, in connection with persuading and dissuading, traditions were fabricated quite freely, and this was not regarded against the religious law or morality. Rather, this work was generally done by those who bore the appearance of asceticism or fear of Alláh and who passed their nights in praying and days in filling their registers with false traditions. An idea about the number of these fabricated traditions can be had from the fact that out of six hundred thousand traditions al-Bukhárí selected only two thousand seven hundred and sixty-one traditions, (*Táríkh Baghdád*, vol.2, p.8; *al-Irshád as-sárí*, vol.1, p.28; *Sifatu's-safwah*, vol.4, p.143). Muslim thought fit for selection only four thousand out of three hundred thousand (*Táríkh Baghdád,* vol.13, p.101; *al-Munta~am*, vol.5, p.32; *Tabaqát al-huffá~*, vol.2, pp.151,157; *Wafayát al-a`yán*, vol.5, p.194). Abú Dáwúd took four thousand and eight hundred out of five hundred thousand (*Táríkh Baghdád*, vol.9, p.57; *Tabaqát al-huffá~*, vol.2, p.154; *al-Munta~am*, vol.5, p.97; *Wafayát al-a`yán*, vol.2, p.404), and Ahmad ibn Hanbal took thirty thousand out of nearly on million traditions (*Táríkh Baghdád*, vol.4, p.419-420; *Tabaqát al-huffá~*, vol.2, p.17; *Wafayát al-a`yán*, vol.1, p.64; *Tahdhíb at-tahdhíb*, vol.1, p. 74). But when this selection is studied some traditions which come across can, in no circumstances, be attributed to the Prophet. The result is that a group of considerable number has cropped up among Muslims who, in view of these (so-called) authoritative collections and true traditions, completely reject the evidentiary value of the traditions, (For further reference see *al-Ghadír*, vol.5, pp. 208-378).

The second category of relaters of traditions are those who, without appreciating the occasion or context, related whatever they could recollect, right or wrong. Thus, in al-Bukhárí (vol.2, pp.100-102; vol.5, p.98); Muslim (vol.3, pp. 41-45); at-Tirmidhí (vol.3, pp. 327-329); an-Nasá'í (vol.4, p.18); Ibn Májah (vol.1, pp.508-509); Málik ibn Anas (*al-Muwatta'* vol.1, p.234); ash-Sháfi`í (*Ikhtiláf'l-hadíth*, on the side lines of "*al-Umm*", vol.7, p.266); Abú Dáwúd (vol.3, p.194); Ahmad ibn Hanbal (vol.1, pp.41,42) and al-Bayhaqí (vol.4, pp.72-74) in the chapter entitled '*weeping over the dead'* it is stated that when Caliph `Umar was wounded Suhayb came weeping to him, then `Umar said:

> O' Suhayb, you weep over me, while the Prophet had said that the dead person is punished if his people weep over him.

When after the death of Caliph `Umar this was mentioned to `Á'ishah, she said: "May Alláh have mercy on `Umar. The Messenger of Alláh did not say that weeping of relations causes punishment on the dead. but he said that the punishment of an unbeliever increases if his people weep over him." After this `Á'ishah said that according to the Holy Qur'án no person has to bear the burden of another, so how could the burden of those who weep be put on the dead. After this the following verse was quoted by `Á'ishah:

. . . *And no bearer of burden shall bear the burden of another*; . . . (Qur'án, 6:164; 17:15; 35:18; 39:7; 53:38).

The wife of the Holy Prophet `Á'ishah relates that once the Prophet passed by a Jewish woman over whom her people were weeping. The Prophet then remarked, "Her people are weeping over her but she is undergoing punishment in the grave."

The third category of the relaters of traditions is of those who heard some repealed traditions from the Prophet but could not get any chance to hear the repealing traditions which he could relate to others. An example of a repealing tradition is the saying of the Prophet which also contains a reference to the repealed tradition, namely: "I had disallowed you to visit graves, but now you can visit them." (Muslim, vol.3, p.65; at-Tirmidhí, vol.3, p.370; Abú Dáwúd, vol.3, pp. 218, 332; an-Nasá'í, vol.4, p. 89; Ibn Májah, vol.1, pp. 500-501; Málik ibn Anas, vol.2, p. 485; Ahmad ibn Hanbal, vol.1, pp.145, 452; vol.3, pp.38, 63, 66, 237, 350; vol.5, pp. 350, 355, 356, 357, 359, 361; al-hákim, *al-Mustadrak*, vol.1, pp. 374-376; and al-Bayhaqí, vol.4, pp. 76-77). Herein the permission to visit graves has repealed the previous restriction on it. Now, those who heard only the repealed tradition continued acting according to it.

The fourth category of relaters of traditions is of those who were fully aware of the principles of justice, possessed intelligence and sagacity, knew the occasion when a tradition was first uttered (by the Prophet) and were also acquainted with the repealing and the repealed traditions, the particular and the general, and the timely and the absolute. They avoided falsehood and fabrication. Whatever they heard remained preserved in their memory, and they conveyed it with exactness to others. It is they whose traditions are the precious possession of Islam, free from fraud and counterfeit and worthy of being trusted and acted upon. That collection of traditions which has been conveyed through trustworthy bosoms like that of Amír al-mu'minín and has remained free from cutting, curtailing, alteration or change particularly present Islam in its true form. The position of Amír al-mu'minín in Islamic knowledge has been most certainly proved through the following traditions narrated from the Holy Prophet such as:

Amír al-mu'minín, Jábir ibn `Abdulláh, Ibn `Abbás and `Abdulláh ibn `Umar have narrated from the Holy Prophet that he said:

> I am the city of knowledge and `Alí is its door. He who wants to acquire (my) knowledge should come through its door. (*al-Mustadrak*, vol.3, pp. 126-127; *al-Isti`áb*, vol.3, p.1102; *Usd al-ghábah*, vol.4, p.22; *Táríkh Baghdád*, vol.2, p.377; vol.4, p.348; vol.7, p.172; vol.11, pp. 48-50; *Tadhkirah al-huffár*; vol.4, p.28; *Majmá` az-zawá'id*, vol.9, p.114; *Tahdhíb at-tahdhíb*, vol.6, p.320; vol.7, p.337; *Lisán al-mízán*, vol.2, pp.122-123; *Táríkh al-khulafá'*, p.170; *Kanz al-`ummál*, vol.6, pp.152,156,401; *`Umdah al-qárí*, vol.7, p.631; *Sharh al-mawáhib al-ladunniyyah*, vol.3, p.143).

> Amír al-mu'minín and Ibn `Abbás have also narrated from the Holy Prophet that:

> I am the store-house of wisdom and `Alí is its door. He who wants to acquire wisdom should come through its door. (*hilyah al-awliyá'*, vol.1, p.64; *Masábíh as-sunnah*, vol.2, p.275; *Táríkh Baghdád*, vol.11, p.204; *Kanz al-`ummál*, vol.6, p.401; *ar-Riyá_ an-na_irah*, vol.2, p.193).

If only people could take the Prophet's blessings through these sources of knowledge. But it is a tragic chapter of history that although traditions are accepted through the Khárijites and enemies of the Prophet's family, whenever the series of relaters includes the name of any individual from among the Prophet's family there is hesitation in accepting the tradition.

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SERMON 210

The greatness of Alláh and the creation of the Universe

It is through the strength of Alláh’s greatness and His subtle power of innovation that He made solid dry earth out of the water of the fathomless, compact and dashing ocean. Then He made from it layers and separated them into seven skies after they had been joined together. So, they became stationary at His command and stopped at the limit fixed by Him. He so made the earth that it is born by deep blue, surrounded and suspended water which is obedient to His command and has submitted to His awe while its flow has stopped due to fear of Him.

He also created high hills, rocks of stones and lofty mountains. He put them in their positions and made them remain stationary. Their peaks rose into the air while their roots remained in the water. In this way He raised the mountains above the plains and fixed their foundations in the vast expanse wherever they stood. He made their peaks high and made their bodies lofty. He made them like pillars for the earth and fixed them in it like pegs. Consequently, the earth became stationary; otherwise it might bend with its inhabitants or sink inwards with its burden, or shift from its positions.

Therefore, glorified is He who stopped it after the flowing of its waters and solidified it after the watery state of its sides. In this way He made it a cradle for His creatures and spread it for them in the form of a floor over the deep ocean which is stationary and does not move and is fixed and does not flow. Severe winds move it here and there and clouds draw up water from it.

Verily in this there is a lesson unto him who feareth (Alláh) (Qur’án, 79:26)

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SERMON 211

About those who give up supporting right

O' my Alláh! whoever listens to our utterance which is just and which seeks the prosperity of religion and the worldly life and does not seek mischief, but rejects it after listening, then he certainly turns away from Thy support and desists from strengthening Thy religion. We make Thee a witness over him and Thou art the greatest of all witnesses, and we make all those who inhabit Thy earth and Thy skies witness over him. Thereafter, Thou alone can make us needless of his support and question him for his sin.

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SERMON 212

The Sublimity of Alláh and a eulogy of the Prophet

Praise be to Alláh who is above all similarity to the creatures, is above the words of describers, who displays the wonders of His management for the on-lookers, is hidden from the imagination of thinkers by virtue of the greatness of His glory, has knowledge without acquiring it, adding to it or drawing it (from someone), and Who is the ordainer of all matters without reflecting or thinking. He is such that gloom does not concern Him, nor does He seek light from brightness, night does not overtake Him nor does the day pass over Him (so as to affect Him in any manner). His comprehension (of things) is not through eyes and His knowledge is not dependent on being informed.

A part of the same sermon about the Prophet

Alláh deputised the Prophet with light, and accorded him the highest precedence in selection. Through him Alláh united those who were divided, overpowered the powerful, overcame difficulties and levelled rugged ground, and thus removed misguidance from right and left.

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SERMON 213

The Prophet's nobility of descent

I stand witness that He is just and does justice, He is the arbiter Who decides (between right and wrong). I also stand witness that Muhammad is His slave. His Messenger and the Chief of His creatures. Whenever Alláh divided the line of descent, He put him in the better one, and therefore, no evil-doer ever shared with him nor was any vicious person his partner.

Beware! surely Alláh, the Glorified, has provided for virtue those who are suited to it, for truth pillars (that support it), and for obedience protection (against deviation). In every matter of obedience you will find Alláh, the Glorified's succour that will speak through tongues and accord firmness to hearts. It has sufficiency for those who seek sufficiency, and a cure for those who seek cure.

The characteristics of the virtuous whose guidance must be followed

Know that, certainly, those creatures of Alláh who preserve His knowledge offer protection to those things which He desires to be protected and make His springs flow (for the benefit of others). They contact each other with friendliness and meet each other with affection. They drink water from cups that quench the thirst and return from the watering places fully satiated. Misgiving does not affect them and backbiting does not gain ground with them. In this way Alláh has tied their nature with good manners. Because of this they love each other and meet each other. They have become superior, like seeds which are selected by taking some and throwing away others. This selection has distinguished them and the process of choosing has purified them.

Therefore, man should secure honour by adopting these qualities. He should fear the day of Doom before it arrives, and he should appreciate the shortness of his life and the shortness of his sojourn in the place of stay which has only to last for his change over to the next place. He should therefore do something for his change over and for the known stages of his departure. Blessed be he who possesses a virtuous heart, who obeys one who guides him, desists from him who takes to ruin, catches the path of safety with the help of him who provides him light (of guidance) and by obeying the leader who commands him, hastens towards guidance before its doors are closed, gets open the door of repentance and removes the (stain of) sins. He has certainly been put on the right path and guided towards the straight road.

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SERMON 214

A prayer which Amír al-mu'minín often recited

Praise be to Alláh! Who made me such that I have not died nor am I sick, nor have my veins been infected with disease, nor have I been hauled up for my evil acts, nor am I without progeny, nor have I forsaken my religion, nor do I disbelieve in my Lord, nor do I feel strangeness with my faith, nor is my intelligence affected, nor have I been punished with the punishment of peoples before me. I am a slave in Thy possession, I have been guilty of excesses over myself. Thou hast exhausted Thy pleas over me and I have no plea (before Thee). I have no power to take except what Thou givest me, and I cannot evade except what Thou savest me from.

O' my Alláh! I seek Thy protection from becoming destitute despite Thy riches, from being misguided despite Thy guidance, from being molested in Thy realm and from being humiliated while authority rests with Thee.

O' my Alláh! let my spirit be the first of those good objects that Thou takest from me and the first trust out of Thy favours held in trust with me.

O' my Alláh! we seek Thy protection from turning away from Thy command or revolting against Thy religion, or being led away by our desires instead of by guidance that comes from Thee.

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SERMON 215

Delivered at the battle of Siffín

Mutual rights of the ruler and the ruled

So now, Alláh, the Glorified, has, by placing me over your affairs, created my right over you, and you too have a right over me like mine over you. A right is very vast in description but very narrow in equitability of action. It does not accrue to any person unless it accrues against him also, and right does not accrue against a person unless it also accrues in his favour. If there is any right which is only in favour of a person with no (corresponding) right accruing against him it is solely for Alláh, the Glorified, and not for His creatures by virtue of His might over His creatures and by virtue of the justice permeating all His decrees. Of course, He the Glorified, has created His right over creatures that they should worship Him, and has laid upon Himself (the obligation of) their reward equal to several times the recompense as a mark of His bounty and the generosity that He is capable of.

Then, from His rights, He, the Glorified, created certain rights for certain people against others. He made them so as to equate with one another. Some of these rights produce other rights. Some rights are such that they do not accrue except with others. The greatest of these rights that Alláh, the Glorified, has made obligatory is the right of the ruler over the ruled and the right of the ruled over the ruler. This is an obligation which Alláh, the Glorified, has placed on each other. He has made it the basis of their (mutual) affection, and an honour for their religion. Consequently, the ruled cannot prosper unless the rulers are sound, while the rulers cannot be sound unless the ruled are steadfast.

If the ruled fulfil the rights of the ruler and the ruler fulfils their rights, then right attains the position of honour among them, the ways of religion become established, signs of justice become fixed and the *sunnah* gains currency.

In this way time will improve, the continuance of government will be expected, and the aims of the enemies will be frustrated. But if the ruled gain sway over the ruler, or the ruler oppresses the ruled, then difference crops up in every word, signs of oppression appear, mischief enters religion and the ways of the *sunnah* are forsaken. Then desires are acted upon, the commands (of religion) are discarded, diseases of the spirit become numerous and there is no hesitation in disregarding even great rights, nor in committing big wrongs. In such circumstances, the virtuous are humiliated while the vicious are honoured, and there are serious chastisements from Alláh, the Glorified, onto the people.

You should therefore counsel each other (for the fulfilment of your obligations) and co-operate with each other. However extremely eager a person may be to secure the pleasure of Alláh, and however fully he strives for it, he cannot discharge (his obligation for) obedience to Alláh, the Glorified, as is really due to Him, and it is an obligatory right of Alláh over the people that they should advise each other to the best of their ability and co-operate with each other for the establishment of truth among them. No person, however great his position in the matter of truth, and however advanced his distinction in religion may be, is above co-operation in connection with the obligations placed on him by Alláh. Again, no man, however small he may be regarded by others, and however humble he may appear before eyes, is too low to co-operate or to be afforded co-operation in this matter.

One of Amír al-mu'minín's companions replied to him by a long speech wherein he praised him much and mentioned his own listening to him and obeying him, whereupon Amír al-mu'minín said:

If a man in his mind regards Alláh's glory as being high and believes in his heart that Alláh's position is sublime, then it is his right that on account of the greatness of these things he should regard all other things small. Among such persons he on whom Alláh's bounty is great and Alláh's favours are kind has a greater obligation, because Alláh's bounty over any person does not increase without an increase in Alláh's right over him.

In the view of virtuous people, the worst position of rulers is that it may be thought about them that they love glory, and their affairs may be taken to be based on pride. I would really hate that it may occur to your mind that I love high praises or to hear eulogies. By the grace of Alláh I am not like this. Even If I had loved to be mentioned like this, I would have given it up in submissiveness before Alláh, the Glorified, rather than accept greatness and sublimity to which He is more entitled. Generally, people feel pleased at praise after good performances; but do not mention for me handsome praise for the obligations I have discharged towards Alláh and towards you, because of (my) fear about those obligations which I have not discharged and for issuing injunctions which could not be avoided, and do not address me in the manner despots are addressed.

Do not evade me as the people of passion are (to be) evaded, do not meet me with flattery and do not think that I shall take it ill if a true thing is said to me, because the person who feels disgusted when truth is said to him or a just matter is placed before him would find it more difficult to act upon them. Therefore, do not abstain from saying a truth or pointing out a matter of justice because I do not regard myself above erring. (1) I do not escape erring in my actions but that Alláh helps me (in avoiding errors) in matters in which He is more powerful than I. Certainly, I and you are slaves owned by Alláh, other than Whom there is no Lord except Him. He owns our selves which we do not own. He took us from where we were towards what means prosperity to us. He altered our straying into guidance and gave us intelligence after blindness.

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(1). That the innocence of angels is different from the innocence of man needs no detailed discussion. The innocence of angels means that they do not possess the impulse to sin, but the innocence of man means that, although he has human frailties and passions, yet he possesses a peculiar power to resist them and he is not over-powered by them so as to commit sins. This very ability is called innocence and it prevents the rising up of personal passions and impulses. Amír al-mu'minín's saying that "I do not regard myself above erring" refers to those human dictates and passions, and his saying that "Alláh helps me in avoiding 'errors'" refers to innocence. The same tone is found in the Qur'án in the words of Prophet Yúsuf that:

> *I exculpate not myself, verily* (one's) *self is wont to bid* (him to) *evil, except such as my Lord hath had mercy on; verily my Lord is Oft-forgiving, All-merciful. (12:53)*

Just as in this verse, because of the existence of exception, its first part cannot be used to argue against his innocence, similarly, due to the existence of the exception "but that Alláh helps me in avoiding errors" in Amír al-mu'minín's saying, its first part cannot be used to argue against his innocence, otherwise the Prophet's innocence too will have to be rejected. In the same way, the last sentence of this sermon should not be taken to mean that before the proclamation of prophethood he had been under the influence of pre-Islamic beliefs, and that just as others had been unbelievers he too might have been in darkness and misguidance, because from his very birth Amír al-mu'minín was brought-up by the Prophet and the effect of his training and up-bringing permeated him. It cannot therefore be imagined that he who had from infancy trod in the foot-prints of the Prophet would deviate from guidance even for a moment. Thus, al-Mas`údí has written:

> Amír al-mu'minín never believed in any other god than Alláh so that there could be the question of his accepting Islam. He rather followed the Prophet in all his actions and (virtually) initiated him, and in this very state he attained majority. (*Murúj adh-dhahab*, vol. 2, p. 3).

Here, by those whom Alláh led from darkness into guidance, the reference is to the persons whom Amír al-mu'minín was addressing. Ibn Abi'l-hadíd writes in this connection:

> The reference here is not to his own self because he had never been an unbeliever so as to have accepted Islam after that, but in these words he is referring to those group of people whom he was addressing. (*Sharh Nahj al-balághah*, vol. 11, p. 108)

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SERMON 216

About the excesses of the Quraysh

O’ my Alláh! I beseech Thee to take revenge on the Quraysh and those who are assisting them, for they have cut asunder my kinship and over-turned my cup and have joined together to contest a right to which I was entitled more than anyone else. They said to me: “If you get your right, that will be just, but if you are denied the right, that too will be just. Endure it with sadness or kill yourself in grief.” I looked around but found no one to shield me, protect me or help me except the members of my family. I refrained from flinging them into death and therefore closed my eyes despite the dust, kept swallowing saliva despite (the suffocation of) grief and endured pangs of anger although it was more bitter than colocynth and more grievous than the bite of knives.

as-Sayyid ar-Radí says: This utterance of Amír al-mu’minín has already appeared in an earlier Sermon (171), but I have repeated it here because of the difference of versions.

A part of the same sermon about those who went to Basrah to fight Amír al-mu’minín

They marched on my officers and the custodians of the public treasury which is still under my control and on the people of a metropolis, all of whom were obedient to me and were in allegiance to me. They created division among them, instigated their party against me and attacked my followers. They killed a group of them by treachery, while another group took up swords against them and fought with the swords till they met Alláh as adherents to truth.

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SERMON 217

When Amír al-mu'minín passed by the corpses of talhah ibn `Ubaydulláh and `Abd ar-Rahmán ibn `Attáb ibn Asíd who were both killed in the battle of Jamal, he said:

Abú Muhammad (talhah) lies here away from his own place. By Alláh, I did not like that the Quraysh should lie killed under the stars. I have avenged myself with the descendants of `Abd Manáf, but the chief persons of Banú Jumah (1) have escaped me. They had stretched their necks towards a matter for which they were not suited, and therefore their necks were broken before they reached the goal.

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(1). In the battle of Jamal a group of Banú Jumah was with `Á'ishah, but the chief men of this group fled away from the battle-field. Some of them were: `Abdulláh at-Tawíl ibn Safwán, Yahyá ibn Hakím, `Ámir ibn Mas`úd and Ayyúb ibn Habíb. From this group (Banú Jumah) only two persons were killed.

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SERMON 218

Qualities of the God-fearing and the pious

He (the believer) kept his mind alive and killed (the desires of) his heart till his body became thin, his bulk turned light and an effulgence of extreme brightness shone for him. It lighted the way for him and took him on the (right) path. Different doors led him to the door of safety and the place of (his permanent) stay. His feet, balancing his body became fixed in the position of safety and comfort, because he kept his heart (in good acts) and pleased his Alláh.

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SERMON 219

Amír al-mu'minín recited the verse

Engage (your) *vying in exuberance, until ye come to the graves.* (1) (Qur'án, 102:1-2)

Then he said:

How distant (from achievement) is their aim, how neglectful are these visitors and how difficult is the affair. They have not taken lessons from things which are full of lessons, but they took them from far off places. Do they boast on the dead bodies of their fore-fathers, or do they regard the number of dead persons as a ground for feeling boastful of their number? They want to revive the bodies that have become spiritless and the movements that have ceased. They are more entitled to be a source of lesson than a source of pride. They are more suitable for being a source of humility than of honour.

They looked at them with weak-sighted eyes and descended into the hollow of ignorance. If they had asked about them from the dilapidated houses and empty courtyards, they would have said that they went into the earth in the state of misguidance and you too are heading ignorantly towards them. You trample their skulls, want to raise constructions on their corpses, you graze what they have left and live in houses which they have vacated. The days (that lie) between them and you are also bemoaning you and reciting elegies over you.

They are your fore-runners in reaching the goal and have arrived at the watering places before you. They had positions of honour and plenty of pride. They were rulers and holders of positions. Now they have gone into the interstice where earth covers them from above and is eating their flesh and drinking their blood. They lie in the hollows of their graves lifeless, no more growing, and hidden, not to be found. The approach of dangers does not frighten them, and the adversity of circumstances does not grieve them. They do not mind earthquakes, nor do they pay heed to thunders. They are gone and not expected back. They are existent but unseen. They were united but are now dispersed. They were friendly and are now separated.

Their accounts are unknown and their houses are silent, not because of length of time or distance of place, but because they have been made to drink the cup (of death) which has changed their speech into dumbness, their hearing into deafness and their movements into stillness. It seems as though they are fallen in slumber. They are neighbours not feeling affection for each other, or friends who do not meet each other. The bonds of their knowing each other have been worn out and the connections of their friendship have been cut asunder. Everyone of them is therefore alone although they are a group, and they are strangers, even though friends. They are unaware of morning after a night and of evening after a day. The night or the day when they departed has become ever existent for them. (2) They found the dangers of their placed of stay more serious than they had apprehended, and they witnessed that its signs were greater than they had guessed. The two objectives (namely paradise and hell) have been stretched for them upto a point beyond the reach of fear or hope. Had they been able to speak they would have become dumb to describe what they witnessed or saw.

Even though their traces have been wiped out and their news has stopped (circulating), eyes are capable of drawing a lesson, as they looked at them, ears of intelligence heard them and they spoke without uttering words. So, they said that handsome faces have been destroyed and delicate bodies have been smeared with earth. We have put on a worn-out shroud. The narrowness of the grave has overwhelmed us and strangeness has spread among us. Our silent abodes have been ruined. The beauty of our bodies has disappeared. Our known features have become hateful. Our stay in the places of strangeness has become long. We do not get relief from pain, nor widening from narrowness.

Now. if you portray them in your mind, or if the curtains concealing them are removed from them for you, in this state when their ears have lost their power and turned deaf, their eyes have been filled with dust and sunk down, their tongues which were very active have been cut into pieces, their hearts which were ever wakeful have become motionless in their chests, in every limb of theirs a peculiar decay has occurred which has deformed it, and has paved the way for calamity towards it, all these lie powerless, with no hand to help them and no heart to grieve over them, (then) you would certainly notice the grief of (their) hearts and the dirt of (their) eyes.

Every trouble of theirs is such that its position does not change and the distress does not clear away. How many a prestigious body and amazing beauty the earth has swallowed, although when in the world he enjoyed abundant pleasures and was nurtured in honour. He clung to enjoyments (even) in the hour of grief. If distress befell

him he sought refuge in consolation (derived) through the pleasures of life and playing and games. He was laughing at the world while the world was laughing at him because of his life full of forgetfulness. Then time trampled him like thorns, the days weakened his energy and death began to look at him from near. Then he was overtaken by a grief which he had never felt, and ailments appeared in place of the health he had previously possessed.

He then turned to that with which the physician had made him familiar, namely suppressing the hot (diseases) with cold (medicines) and curing the cold with hot doses, but the cold things did nothing save aggravate the hot ailments, while the hot ones did nothing except increasing the coldness, nor did he acquire temperateness in his constitution but rather every ailment of his increased till his physicians became helpless, his attendants grew loathsome and his own people felt disgusted from describing his disease, avoided answering those who enquired about him and quarrelled in front of him about the serious news which they were concealing from him. Thus, someone would say "his condition is what it is" and would console them with hopes of his recovery, while another one would advocate patience on missing him, recalling to them the calamities that had befallen the earlier generations.

In this state when he was getting ready to depart from the world and leave his beloved ones, such a serious choking overtook him that his senses became bewildered and the dampness of his tongue dried up. Now, there was many an important question whose reply he knew about he could not utter it, and many a voice that was painful for his heart that he heard but remained (unmoved) as though he was deaf the voice of either and elder whom he used to respect or of a younger whom he used to caress. The pangs of death are too hideous to be covered by description or to be appreciated by the hearts of the people in this world.

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(1). The genesis of the descending of this verse is that the tribes of Banú `Abd Manáf and Banú Sahm began to boast against each other over the abundance of their wealth and the number of their tribesmen, and in order to prove they had a greater number each one began to include their dead as well, whereupon this verse was revealed to the effect that abundance of riches and majority in numbers has made you so forgetful that you count the dead also with the living. This verse is also taken to mean that abundance of riches and progeny has made you forgetful till you reached the graves, but the utterance of Amír al-mu'minín supports the first meaning.

(2). This means that for him he who dies in the day it is always day whereas for him who dies in the night the darkness of night never dispels, because they are at a place where there is no turning of the moon and the sun and no rotation of the nights and the days. The same meaning has been expressed by a poet like this:

There is sure to be a day without a night,
Or a night that would come without a day.

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SERMON 220

Delivered after reciting the verse:

> *. . . therein declare glory unto Him in the mornings and the evenings; Men whom neither merchandise nor any sale diverteth from the remembrance of Alláh and constancy in prayer and paying the poor-rate; they fear the day when the hearts and eyes shall writhe of the anguish.* (Qur'án, 24:36-37)

Certainly, Alláh, the Glorified, the Sublime, has made His remembrance the light for hearts which hear with its help despite deafness, see with its help despite blindness and become submissive with its help despite unruliness.

In all the periods and times when there were no prophets, there have been persons with whom Alláh, precious are His bounties, whispered through their wits and spoke through their minds. With the help of the bright awakening of their ears, eyes and hearts they keep reminding others of the remembrance of the days of Alláh and making others feel fear for Him like guide-points in wildernesses. Whoever adopts the middle way, they praise his ways and give him the tidings of deliverance, but whoever goes right and left they vilify his ways and frighten him with ruin. In this way, they served as lamps in these darknesses and guides through these doubts.

There are some people devoted to the remembrance (of Alláh) who have adopted it in place of worldly matters so that commerce or trade does not turn them away from it. They pass their life in it. They speak into the ears of neglectful persons warning against matters held unlawful by Alláh, they order them to practise justice and themselves keep practising it, and they refrain them from the unlawful and themselves refrain from it. It is as though they have finished the journey of this world towards the next world and have beheld what lies beyond it. Consequently, they have become acquainted with all that befell them in the interstice during their long stay therein, and the Day of Judgement fulfils its promises for them. Therefore, they removed the curtain from these things for the people of the world, till it was as though they were seeing what people did not see and were hearing what people did not hear.

If you picture them in your mind in their admirable positions and well-known sittings, when they have opened the records of their actions and are prepared to render an account of themselves in respect of the small as well as the big things they were ordered to do but they failed to do, or were ordered to refrain from but they indulged therein, and they realised the weight of their burden (of bad acts) on their backs, and they felt too weak to bear them, then they wept bitterly and spoke to each other wile still crying and bewailing to Alláh in repentance and acknowledgement (of their shortcomings), you would find them to be emblems of guidance and lamps in darkness, angels would be surrounding them, peace would be descending upon them, the doors of the sky would be opened for them and positions of honour would be assigned to them in the place of which Alláh had informed them. Therefore, He has appreciated their actions and praised their position. They call Him and breathe in the air of forgiveness, they are ever needy of His bounty and remain humble before His greatness, the length of their grief has pained their hearts, and the length of weeping their eves. They knock at every door of inclination towards Alláh. They ask Him Whom generosity does not make destitute and from Whom those who approach Him do not get disappointed.

Therefore, take account of yourself for your own sake because the account of others will be taken by one other than you.

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SERMON 221

Amír al-mu'minín recited the verse:

O' thou man! what hath beguild thee from thy Lord, the Most Gracious One. (Qur'án, 82:6)

Then he said:

The addressee (in this verse) is devoid of argument and his excuse is most deceptive. He is detaining himself in ignorance.

O' man! what has emboldened you to (commit) sins, what had deceived you about your Alláh and what has made you satisfied with the destruction of yourself. Is there no cure for your ailment or no awakening from your sleep? Do you not have pity on yourself as you have on others? Generally, when you see anyone exposed to the heat of the sun you cover him with shade, or if you see anyone afflicted with grief that pains his body you weep out of pity for him. What has then made you patient over your own disease, what has made you firm in your own afflictions, and what has consoled you from weeping over yourself although your life is the most precious of all lives to you, and why does not the fear of an ailment that may befall you in the night keep you wakeful although you lie on the way to Alláh's wrath due to your sins?

You should cure the disease of languor in your heart by determination, and the sleep of neglectfulness in your eyes by wakefulness. Be obedient to Alláh, and love His remembrance, and picture to yourself that you are running away while He is approaching you. He is calling you to His forgiveness and concealing your faults with His kindness, while you are fleeing away from Him towards others. Certainly, Great is Alláh the powerful, Who is so generous, and how humble and weak are you and still so bold to commit His disobedience although you live in His protection and undergo changes of life in the expanse of His kindness. He does not refuse you His kindness and does not remove His protection from you. In fact, you have not been without His kindness even for a moment, whether it be a favour that He conferred upon you or a sin of yours that He has concealed or a calamity that He has warded off from you. What is your idea about Him if you had obeyed Him? By Alláh, if this had been the case with two persons equal in power and matching in might (one being inattentive and the other showering favours upon you) then you would have been the first to adjudge yourself to be of bad behaviour and evil deeds.

I truthfully say that the world has not deceived you but you have had yourself deceived by it. The world had opened to you the curtains and divulged to you (everything) equally. And in all that it foretold you about the troubles befalling your bodies and the decay in your power, it has been too true and faithful in promise, and did not speak a lie to you or deceive you. There are many who advise you about it but they are blamed, and speak the truth about it but they are opposed. If you understand the world by means of dilapidated houses and forlorn abodes, then with your good understanding and far reaching power of drawing lessons you will find it like one who is kind over you and cautious about you. It is good abode for him who does not like it as an abode, and a good place of stay for him who does not regard it a permanent home for stay.

Only those who run away from this world today will be regarded virtuous tomorrow. When the earthquake occurs, the Day of Resurrection approaches with all its severities, the people of every worshipping place cling to it, all the devotees cling to the object of their devotion and all the followers cling to their leader. Then on that day even the opening of an eye in the air and the sound of a footstep on the ground will be assigned its due through His Justice and His Equity. On that day many an argument will prove void and a contention for excuses will stand rejected.

Therefore, you should now adopt for yourself the course with which your excuse may hold good and your plea may be proved. Take from the transient things of this world that which will stay for you (in the next world), provide for your journey, keep (your) gaze on the brightness of deliverance and keep ready the saddles (for setting off).

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SERMON 222

About keeping aloof from oppression and misappropriation. `Aqíl's condition of poverty and destitution

By Alláh, I would rather pass a night in wakefulness on the thorns of *as-sa`dán* (a plant having sharp prickles) or be driven in chains as a prisoner than meet Alláh and His Messenger on the Day of Judgement as an oppressor over any person or a usurper of anything out of worldly wealth. And how can I oppress any one for (the sake of a life) that is fast moving towards destruction and is to remain under the earth for a long time.

By Alláh, I certainly saw (my brother) `Aqíl fallen in destitution and he asked me a *Sá`* (about three kilograms in weight) out of your (share of) wheat, and I also saw his children with dishevelled hair and a dusty countenance due to starvation, as though their faces had been blackened by indigo. He came to me several times and repeated his request to me again and again. I heard him, and he thought I would sell my faith to him and follow his tread leaving my own way. Then I (just) heated a piece of iron and took it near his body so that he might take a lesson from it, then he cried as a person in protracted illness cries with pain and he was about to get burnt with its branding. Then I said to him, "Moaning women may moan over you, O' `Aqíl. Do you cry on account of this (heated) iron which has been made by a man for fun while you are driving me towards the fire which Alláh, the Powerful, has prepared for (a manifestation of) His wrath? Should you cry from pain, but I should not cry from the flames?"

A stranger incident than this is that a man (1) came to us in the night; with a closed flask full of honey paste but I disliked it as though it was the saliva of a serpent or its vomit. I asked him whether it was a reward, or *zakát* (poor-tax) or charity, for these are forbidden to us members of the Prophet's family. He said it was neither this nor that but a present. Then I said, "Childless women may weep over you. Have you come to deviate me from the religion of Alláh, or are you mad, or have you been overpowered by some jinn, or are you speaking without senses? "

By Alláh, even if I am given all the domains of the seven (stars) with all that exists under the skies in order that I may disobey Alláh to the extent of snatching one grain of barley from an ant I would not do it. For me your world is lighter than the leaf in the mouth of a locust that is chewing it. What has `Alí to do with bounties that will pass away and pleasures that will not last? We do seek protection of Alláh from the slip of wisdom and the evils of mistakes, and from Him we seek succour.

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(1). It was al-Ash`ath ibn Qays.

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SERMON 223

Supplication

O' my Alláh! preserve (the grace of) my face with easiness of life and do not disgrace my countenance with destitution, lest I may have to beg a livelihood from those who beg from Thee, try to seek the favour of Thy evil creatures, engage myself in praising those who give to me, and be tempted in abusing those who do not give to me, although behind all these Thou art the master of giving and denying.

. . . Verily Thou over all things, art the All-powerful. (Qur'án, 66:8)

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SERMON 224

Transience of the world and the helplessness of those in graves

This is a house surrounded by calamities and well-known for deceitfulness. Its conditions do not last and those who inhabit it do not remain safe. Its conditions are variable and its ways changing. Life in it is blameworthy and safety in it is non-existent. Yet its people are targets; it strikes them with its arrows and destroys them through death.

Know, O' creatures of Alláh, that, certainly, you and all the things of this world that you have are (treading) on the lines of those (who were) before you. They were of longer ages, had more populated houses and were of more lasting traces. Their voices have become silent, their movements have become stationary, their bodies have become rotten, their houses have become empty and their traces have been obliterated. Their magnificent places and spread-out carpets were changed to stones, laid-in-blocks and cave-like dug out graves whose very foundation is based on ruins and whose construction has been made with soil. Their positions are contiguous, but those settled in them are like far flung strangers. They are among the people of their area but feel lonely, and they are free from work but still engaged (in activity). They feel no attachment with homelands nor do they keep contact among themselves like neighbours despite nearness of neighbourhood and priority of abodes. And how can they meet each other when decay has ground them with its chest, and stones and earth have eaten them.

It is as though you too have gone where they have gone, the same sleeping place has caught you and the same place has detained you. What will then be your position when your affairs reach their end and graves are turned upside down (to throw out the dead)?

> *There shall every soul realise what it hath sent before, and they shall be brought back to Alláh, their true Lord, and what they did fabricate* (the false deities) *will vanish* (away) *from them.* (Qur'án, 10:30)

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SERMON 225

Supplication

O' my Alláh! Thou art the most attached to Thy lovers and the most ready to assist those who trust in Thee. Thou seest them in their concealments, knowest whatever is in their consciences, and art aware of the extent of their intelligence. Consequently, their secrets are open to Thee and their hearts are eager from Thee. If loneliness bores them, Thy remembrance gives them solace. If distresses befall them, they beseech Thy protection, because they know that the reins of affairs are in Thy hands, and that their movements depend upon Thy commands .

O' my Alláh! if I am unable to express my request or cannot see my needs, then guide me towards my betterment and take my betterment and take my heart towards the correct goal. This is not against (the mode of) Thy guidance nor anything new against Thy ways of support.

O' my Alláh! deal with me through Thy forgiveness and do not deal with me according to Thy justice.

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SERMON 226

About a companion who passed away from this world before the occurrence of troubles.

May Alláh reward such and such man (1) who straightened the curve, cured the disease, abandoned mischief and established the *sunnah*. He departed (from this world) with untarnished clothes and little shortcomings. He achieved good (of this world) and remained safe from its evils. He offered Alláh's obedience and feared Him as He deserved. He went away and left the people in dividing ways wherein the misled cannot obtain guidance and the guided cannot attain certainty.

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(1). Ibn Abi'l-hadíd has written (in *Sharh Nahj al-balághah*, vol. 14, pp. 3-4) that the reference here is to the second Caliph `Umar, and that these sentences have been uttered in his praise as indicated by the word " `Umar" written under the word "such and such" in as-Sayyid ar-Radí's own hand in the manuscript of *Nahj al-balághah* written by him. This is Ibn Abi'l-hadíd's statement, but it is to be seen that if as-Sayyid ar-Radí had written the word "`Umar" by way of explanation it should have existed, as other explanations by him have remained, in those versions which have been copied from his manuscript. Even now there exists in al-Músil (Iraq) university the oldest copy of *Nahj al-balághah* written by the famous calligraphist Yáqút al-Musta`simí; but no one has afforded any clue to this explanation of as-Sayyid ar-Radí. Even if the view of Ibn Abi'l-hadíd is accepted it would be deemed to represent the personal opinion of as-Sayyid ar-Radí which may serve as a supplementary argument in support of an original argument but this personal view cannot be assigned any regular importance.

It is strange that two and a half centuries after as-Sayyid ar-Radí namely in the seventh century A.H., Ibn Abi'l Hadíd makes the statement that the reference here is to Caliph `Umar and that as-Sayyid ar-Radí himself had so indicated, as a result of which some other annotators also followed the same line, but the contemporaries of as-Sayyid ar-Radí who wrote about *Nahj al-balághah* have given no such indication in their writings although as contemporaries they should have had better information about as-Sayyid Ar-Radí's writing. Thus, al-`Allámah `Alí ibn NÁsir who was a contemporary of as-Sayyid ar-Radí and wrote an annotation of *Nahj al-balághah* under the name of *A`lám Nahj al-balághah* writes in connection with this sermon:

> Amír al-mu'minín has praised one of his own companions for his good conduct. He had died before the troubles that arose after the death of the Prophet of Alláh.

This is supported by the annotations of *Nahj al-balághah* written by al-`Allámah Qutbu'd-Dín ar-Ráwandí (d. 573 A.H.). Ibn Abi'l-hadíd (vol. 14, p. 4) and Ibn Maytham al-Bahrání (in *Sharh Nahj al-balághah,* vol. 4, p. 97) have quoted his following view.

By this Amír al-mu'minín refers to one of his own companions who died before the mischief and disruption that occurred following the death of the Prophet of Alláh.

Al-`Allámah al-hájj al-Mirzá Habíbu'lláh al-Khú'í is of the opinion that the person is Málik ibn al-hárith al-Ashtar on the ground that after the assassination of Málik the situation of the Muslim community was such as Amír al-mu'minín explains in this sermon.

al-Khú'í adds that:

> Amír al-mu'minín has praised Málik repeatedly such as in his letter to the people of Egypt sent through Málik when he was made the governor of that place, and like his utterances when the news of Málik's assassination reached him, he said: "Málik! who is Málik? If Málik was a stone, he was hard and solid; if he was a rock, he was a great rock which had no parallel. Women have become barren to give birth to such as Málik." Amír al-mu'minín had even expressed in some of his utterances that, "Málik was to me as I was to the Holy Prophet." Therefore, one who possesses such a position certainly deserves such attributes and even beyond that. (*Sharh Nahj al-balághah*, vol. 14, pp. 374-375)

If these words had been about Caliph `Umar and there was some trustworthiness about it Ibn Abi'l-hadíd would have recorded the authority or tradition and it would have existed in history and been known among the people. But here nothing is found to prove the statement except a few self-concocted events. Thus about the pronouns in the

words *“khayrahá”* and *“sharrahá”* he takes them to refer to the caliphate and writes that these words can apply only to one who enjoys power and authority because without authority it is impossible to establish the *sunnah* or prevent innovation. This is the gist of the argument he has advanced on this occasion; although there is no proof to establish that the antecedent of this pronoun is the caliphate. It can rather refer to the world (when Amír al-mu’minín says, “He achieved good [of this world] and remained safe from its evils.”) and that would be in accord with the context. Again, to regard authority as a condition for the safeguarding of people’s interest and the propagation of the *sunnah* means to close the door to prompting others to good and dissuading them from evil, although Alláh has assigned this duty to a group of the people without the condition of authority:

> *And that there should be among you a group who call* (mankind) *unto virtue and enjoin what is good and forbid wrong; and these are they who shall be successful.* (Qur’án, 3:104)

Similarly it is related from the Prophet:

> So long as people go on prompting for good and dissuading from evil and assisting each other in virtue and piety they will remain in righteousness.

Again, Amír al-mu’minín, in the course of a will, says in general terms:

> Establish the pillars of the Unity of Alláh and the *sunnah*, and keep both these lamps aflame.

In these sayings there is no hint that this obligation cannot be discharged without authority. Facts also tell us that (despite army and force, and power and authority) the rulers and kings could not prevent evil or propagate virtue to the extent to which some unknown godly persons were able to inculcate moral values by imprinting their morality on heart and minds, although they were not backed by any army or force and they didn’t have any equipment save destitution. No doubt authority and control can bend heads down before it, but it is not necessary that it should also pave the way for virtue in hearts. History shows that most of the rulers destroyed the features of Islam. Islam’s existence and progress has been possible by the efforts of those helpless persons who possessed nothing save poverty and discomfiture.

If it is insisted that the reference here should only be to a ruler, then why should it not be taken to mean a companion of Amír al-mu’minín who had been the head of a Province such as Salmán al-Fárisí for whose burial Amír al-mu’minín went to al-Madá’in; and it is not implausible that Amír al-mu’minín might have uttered these words after his burial by way of comments on his life and way of governance. However, to believe that they are about Caliph `Umar is without any proof. In the end, Ibn Abi’l-hadíd has quoted the following statements of (the historian) at-Tabarí in proof of his hypothesis:

“It is related from al-Mughírah ibn Shu`bah that when Caliph `Umar died Ibnah Abí Hathmah said crying. ‘Oh `Umar, you were the man who straightened the curve, removed ills, destroyed mischief, revived the *sunnah*, remained chaste and departed without entangling in evils.’ (According to at-Tabarí) al-Mughírah related that ‘When `Umar was buried I came to `Alí and I wanted to hear something from him about `Umar. So, on my arrival Amír al-mu’minín came out in this state that was wrapped in
one cloth after bathing and was jerking the hair of his head and beard and he had no doubt that the Caliphate would come to him. On this occasion he said, “May Alláh have mercy on `Umar.” Ibnah Abí Hathmah has correctly said that he enjoyed the good of the Caliphate and remained safe from its evils. By Alláh, she did not say it herself but was made to say so.’” (at-Tabarí, vol. 1, p. 2763; Ibn Abi’l-hadíd, vol. 12, p. 5; Ibn Kathír, vol. 7, p. 140)

The relater of this event is al-Mughírah ibn Shu`bah whose adultery with Umm Jamíl, the Caliph `Umar’s saving him from the penalty despite the evidence, and his openly abusing Amír al-mu’minín in Kúfah under Mu`áwiyah’s behest are admitted facts of history. On this ground what weight his statements can carry is quite clear. From the factual point of view also, this story cannot be accepted. Al-Mughírah’s statement that Amír al-mu’minín had no doubt about his Caliphate is against the facts. What were the factors from which he made this guess when the actual facts were to the contrary. If the caliphate was certain for any one, it was `Uthmán. Thus, at the Consultative Committee `Abd ar-Rahmán ibn `Awf said to Amír al-mu’minín: “O’ `Alí! do not create a situation against yourself for I have observed and consulted the people and they all want `Uthmán.” (at-Tabarí, vol. 1, p. 2786; Ibn al-Athír, vol. 3, p. 71; Abu’l-Fidá’, vol. 1, p. 166)

Consequently, Amír al-mu’minín was sure not to get the caliphate as has already been stated on the authority of at-Tabarí’s History, under the sermon of the Camel’s Foam (*ash-Shiqshiqiyyah*), namely that on seeing the names of

the members of the Consultative Committee, Amír al-mu'minín had said to al-`Abbás ibn `Abd al-Muttalib that the caliphate could not be given to anyone except `Uthmán since all the powers had been given to `Abd ar-Rahmán ibn `Awf and he was `Uthmán's brother-in-law (sister's husband) and Sa`d ibn Abí Waqqás was a relative and tribesman of `Abd ar-Rahmán. These two would join in giving the caliphate to him.

At this stage, the question arises as to what the reason was that actuated al-Mughírah to prompt Amír al-mu'minín to say something about `Umar. If he knew that Amír al-mu'minín had good ideas about `Umar, he should have also known his impression; but if he thought that Amír al-mu'minín did not entertain good ideas about him then the purpose of his asking Amír al-mu'minín would be none other than that whatever he may say he would, by exposing it, create an atmosphere against him and make the members of the Consultative Committee suspicious of him. The views of the members of the Consultative Committee are well understood from the very fact that by putting the condition of following the conduct of the first two Caliphs in electing the caliph they had shown their adherence to them. In these circumstances when al-Mughírah tried to play this trick Amír al-mu'minín said just by way of relating a fact that `Umar achieved the good (of this world) and remained safe from its evil. This sentence has no connection with praise or eulogy. `Umar did in his days enjoy all kinds of advantages while his period was free from the mischiefs that cropped up later. After recording this statement Ibn Abi'l-hadíd writes:

From this event the belief gains strength that in this utterance the allusion is towards `Umar.

If the utterance means the word uttered by Ibnah Abí Hathmah about which Amír al-mu'minín has said that they are not her own heart's voice but she was made to utter them, then doubtlessly the reference is to `Umar, but the view that these words were uttered by Amír al-mu'minín in praise of `Umar is not at all established. Rather, from this tradition it is evidently shown that these words were uttered by Ibnah Abí Hathmah. Alláh alone knows on what ground the words of Ibnah Abí Hathmah are quoted and then it is daringly argued that these words were uttered by Amír al-mu'minín about `Umar. It seems Amír al-mu'minín had uttered these words about someone on some occasion, then Ibnah Abí Hathmah used similar words on `Umar's death and then even Amír al-mu'minín's words were taken to be in praise of `Umar. Otherwise, no mind except a mad one can argue that the words uttered by Ibnah Abí Hathmah should be deemed a ground to hold that Amír al-mu'minín said these words in praise of `Umar. Can it be expected, after (a glance at) the sermon of the Camel's Foam, that Amír al-mu'minín might have uttered these words. Again, it is worth consideration that if these words had been uttered by Amír al-mu'minín on `Umar's death, then at the Consultative Committee when he refused to follow the conduct of the (first) two Caliphs it should have been said to him that only the other day he has said that `Umar had established the *sunnah* and banished innovations, so that when his conduct was in accord with the *sunnah* what was the sense in accepting the *sunnah* but refusing to follow his conduct .

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SERMON 227

About allegiance to Amír al-mu'minín for the Caliphate.

(A similar sermon in somewhat different version has already appeared earlier.)

You drew out my hand towards you for allegiance but I held it back and you stretched it but I contracted it. Then you crowed over me as the thirsty camels crowd on the watering cisterns on their being taken there, so much so that shoes were torn, shoulder-cloths fell away and the weak got trampled, and the happiness of people on their allegiance to me was so manifested that small children felt joyful, the old staggered (up to me) for it, the sick too reached for it helter skelter and young girls ran for it without veils.

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SERMON 228

Advice about fear of Alláh, and an account of those who remain apprehensive of death and adopt abstemiousness

Certainly, fear of Alláh is the key to guidance, provision for the next world, freedom from every slavery and deliverance from all ruin. With its help the seeker succeeds and he who makes for safety escapes and achieves his aims.

Perform (good) acts while such acts are being raised (in value), repentance can be of benefit, prayer can be heard, conditions are peaceful and the pens (of the two angels) are in motion (to record the actions). Hasten towards (virtuous) actions before the change of age (to oldness), lingering illness or snatching death (overtakes you). Certainly, death will end your enjoyments, mar your pleasures and remove your objectives. It is an unwanted visitor, an invincible adversary and an unaccounting killer. Its ropes have entrapped you, its evils have surrounded you, its arrowheads have aimed at you, its sway over you is great, its oppression on you is continuous and the chance of its missing you is remote.

Very soon you will be overwhelmed with the gloom of its shades, the severity of its illness, the darkness of its distresses, the nonsense utterances of its pangs, the grief of its destruction, the darkness of its encompassment and the unwholesomeness of its taste. It will seem as if it has come to you all of a sudden, silenced those who were whispering to you, separated your group, destroyed your doings, devastated your houses and altered your successors to distribute your estate among the chief relatives, who did not give you any benefit, or the grieved near ones who could not protect (you), or those rejoicers who did not lament (you).

Therefore, it is upon you to strive, make effort, equip yourself, get ready and provide yourself from the place of provision. And let not the life of this world deceive you as it deceived those before you among the past people and by-gone periods -- those who extracted its milk, benefited from its neglectfulness, passed a long time and turned its new things into old (by living long). Their abodes turned into graves and their wealth into inheritable estate. They do not know who came to them (at their graves); do not pay heed to those who weep over them, and do not respond to those who call them. Therefore, beware of this world as it is treacherous, deceitful and cheating, it gives and takes back, covers with clothes and uncovers. Its pleasure does not last, its hardship does not end and its calamity does not stop.

A part of the same sermon about ascetics

They are from among the people of this world but are not its people, because they remain in it as though they do not belong to it. They act herein on what they observe and hasten here in (to avoid) what they fear. Their bodies move among the people of the next world. They see that the people of this world attach importance to the death of their bodies but they themselves attach more importance to the death of the hearts of those who are living.

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SERMON 229

Amír al-mu'minín delivered this sermon at Dhiqár on his way to Basrah, and the historian al-Wáqidí has mentioned it (in Kitáb al-Jamal).

About the Holy Prophet

The Prophet manifested whatever he was commanded and conveyed the messages of his Lord. Consequently, Alláh repaired through him the cracks, joined through him the slits and created (through him) affection among kin although they bore intense enmity in (their) chests and deep-seated rancour in (their) hearts.

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SERMON 230

`Abdulláh ibn Zama`ah who was one of the followers of Amír al-mu'minín came to him during his Caliphate to ask for some money when Amír al-mu'minín said:

This money is not for me nor for you, but it is the collective property of the Muslims and the acquisition of their swords. If you had taken part with them in their fighting you would have a share equal to theirs, otherwise the earning of their hands cannot be for other than their mouths.

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SERMON 231

On Ja`dah ibn Hubayrah al-Makhzúmí's (1) inability to deliver a sermon.

About speaking the truth

Know that the tongue is a part of a man's body. If the man desists, speech will not co-operate with him and when he dilates, speech will not give him time to stop. Certainly, we are the masters of speaking. Its veins are fixed in us and its branches are hanging over us.

Know that - may Alláh have mercy on you - you are living at a time when those who speak about right are few, when tongues are loath to utter the truth and those who stick to the right are humiliated. The people of this time are engaged in disobedience. Their youths are wicked, their old men are sinful, their learned men are hypocrites, and their speakers are sycophants. Their youngs do not respect their elders, and their rich men do not support the destitute.

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(1). Once Amír al-mu'minín asked his nephew (sister's son) Ja`dah ibn Hubayrah al-Makhzúmí to deliver a sermon, but when he rose for speaking his tongue faltered and he could utter nothing, whereupon Amír al-mu'minín ascended the pulpit to speak and delivered a long sermon out of which a few sentences have been recorded here by as-Sayyid ar-Radí.

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SERMON 232

Causes for difference in the features and traits of people

Dhi`lib al-Yamámí has related from Ahmad ibn Qutaybah, and he from `Abdulláh ibn Yazíd and he from Málik ibn Dihyah who said, "We were with Amír al-mu'minín when discussion arose about the differences of men (in features and conduct) and then Amír al-mu'minín said":

They differ among themselves because of the sources (I) of their clay (from which they have been created). This is because they are either from saltish soil or sweet soil or from rugged earth or soft earth. They, resemble each other on the basis of the affinity of their soil and differ according to its difference. Therefore, sometimes a person of handsome features is weak in intelligence, a tall statured person is of low courage, a virtuous person is ugly in appearance, a short statured person is far-sighted, a good-natured person has an evil trait, a person of perplexed heart has bewildering mind and a sharp-tongued person has a wakeful heart.

(I). Amír al-mu'minín has ascribed the differences in features and characters of people to the differences in the clay from which they are created and according to which their features are shaped and the skeletons of their characters are formed. Therefore, to the extent that their clay of origin is akin, their mental and imaginative tendencies too will be similar and to the extent by which they differ, there will be a difference in their inclinations and tendencies. By origins of a thing are meant those things on which its coming into existence depends, but they should not be its cause. The word *"tín"* is the plural of *"tínah"* which means origin or basis. Here *"tínah"* means semen which after passing through various stages of development emerges in the human shape. Its origin means those constituents from which those items are created which help in the formation of semen. Thus, by saltish, sweet, soft or hard soil the reference is to these elementary constituents. Since those elementary constituents carry different properties the semen growing out of them will also bear different characteristics and propensities which will (eventually) show forth in the differences in features and conduct of those borne in it.

Ibn Abi'l-hadíd has written (in *Sharh Nahj al-balághah*, vol. 13, p. 19) that "origins of *tínah*" implies those preservative factors which are different in their properties as Plato and other philosophers have held. The reason for calling them "origins of *tínah*" is that they serve as an asylum for the human body and prevent the elements from diffusion. Just as the existence of a thing hinges on its basis, in the same way the existence of this body which is made up of elements depends on preservative factors. So long as the preservative factor exists the body is also safe from disruption and disintegration and the elements too are immune to diffusion and dispersal. When it leaves the body the elements also get dispersed.

According to this explanation Amír al-mu'minín's words would mean that Alláh has created different original factors among whom some are vicious and some are virtuous, some are weak and some are strong, and every person will act according to his original factor. If there is similarity in the inclinations of two persons it is because their original factor are similar, and if their tendencies differ it is because their original factors do not have any similarity. But this conclusion is not correct because Amír al-mu'minín's words do not only refer to differences in conduct and behaviour but also of features and shape and the differences of features and shape cannot be the result of differences in original factors.

In any case, whether the original factors are the cause of differences in features and conduct or the elementary constituents are the cause, these words appear to lead to the negation of volition and to prove the compulsion (of destiny) in human actions, because if man's capacity for thinking and acting is dependent on "*tínah*" then he would be compelled to behave himself in a fixed way on account of which he would neither deserve praise for good acts nor be held blame worthy for bad habits. But this hypothesis is incorrect because it is well established that just as Alláh knows everything in creation after its coming into being, in the same way He knew it before its creation. Thus, He knew what actions man would perform of his free will and what he would leave. Therefore, Alláh gave him capacity to act according to his free will, and created him from a suitable "*tínah*". This *tínah* is not the cause of his actions so as to snatch away from him his free will but the meaning of creating from suitable *tínah* is that Alláh does not by force stand in man's way but allows him to tread the path he wants to tread of his own free will.

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SERMON 233

Spoken when Amír al-mu'minín was busy in the funeral ablution (ghusl) of the Holy Prophet and shrouding him

May my father and my mother shed their lives for you. O' Messenger of Alláh! With your death the process of prophethood, revelation and heavenly messages has stopped, which had not stopped at the death of others (prophets). Your position with us (members of your family) is so special that your grief has become a source of consolation (to us) as against the grief of all others; your grief is also common so that all Muslims share it equally. If you had not ordered endurance and prevented us from bewailing, we would have produced a store of tears and even then the pain would not have subsided, and this grief would not have ended, and they would have been too little of our grief for you. But this (death) is a matter that cannot be reversed nor is it possible to repulse it. May my father and my mother die for you; do remember us with Alláh and take care of us.

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SERMON 234

In (1) this sermon Amír al-mu'minín has related his own condition after the Prophet's immigration till his meeting with him.

I began following the path adopted by the Prophet and treading on the lines of his remembrance till I reached al-`Arj.

as-Sayyid ar-Radí says: Amír al-mu'minín's words *"faata'u dhikrahu"* constitute the highest forms of brevity and eloquence. He means to say that he was being given news about the Prophet from the commencement of his setting out till he reached this place, and he has expressed this sense in this wonderful expression.

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(1). Since the commencement of prophethood, the Prophet remained in Mecca for thirteen years. For him, this period was of the severest oppression and destitution. The unbelievers of the Quraysh had closed all the doors of livelihood upon him, and had left no deficiency in inflicting hardships upon him, so much so that in order to take his life they began contriving how to do away with him. Forty of their nobles assembled in the hall of audience (*Dár an-Nadwah*) for consultation, and decided that one individual should be picked out from every tribe and they should jointly attack him. In this way, Banú Háshim would not dare to face all the tribes, and the matter would quieten down on the payment of blood price. To give a practical shape to this scheme, these people sat in ambush near the house of the Prophet on the night of the first of *Rabí` al-awwal*, so that when the prophet slept in his bed he would be attacked. On this side the preparation for killing him was complete, and on the other side Alláh informed him of all the intrigues of the Quraysh unbelievers and commanded him to make `Alí (p.b.u.h.) sleep on his bed and himself to immigrate to Medina. The Prophet sent for `Alí (p.b.u.h.) and disclosing to him his plan, said: "Alí, you lie on my bed." Amír al-mu'minín enquired: "O' Messenger of Alláh, will your life be saved by my sleeping here?" The Prophet said: "Yes." Hearing this Amír al-mu'minín performed a prostration in thanks-giving and, exposing himself fully to the danger, lay on the Prophet's bed while the Prophet left from the rear door. The Quraysh unbelievers were peeping and getting ready for the attack but Abú Lahab said: "It is not proper to attack in the night because there are women and children also in the house. When morning dawns you attack him, but keep watch during night that he should not move anywhere." Consequently, they kept their eyes on the bed throughout the night and soon, on the appearance of the dawn, proceeded forward stealthily. Hearing the sound of their footsteps, Amír al-mu'minín removed the covering from his face and stood up. The Quraysh gazed at him with stretched eyes as to whether it was an illusion or fact. After making sure that it was `Alí they enquired, "Where is Muhammad?" and `Alí replied, "Did you entrust him to me, that now you are asking me?" They had no reply to this. Men ran to chase him but found footprints only up to the cave of Thawr. Beyond that there were neither footprints nor any sign of hiding in the cave. They came back bewildered while the Prophet after staying in the cave for three days left for Medina. Amír al-mu'minín passed these three days in Mecca, returned to the people their properties lying in trust with the Prophet and set off towards Medina to join the Prophet. Upto al-`Arj which is a place between Mecca and Medina, he kept getting news about the Prophet and he continued his anxious march in his search till he met the Prophet at Qubá on the twelfth of *Rabí` al-awwal*, and entered Medina with him. (at-Tabarí, *at-Tafsír*, vol. 9, pp. 148-151*; at-Tarikh*, vol. 1, pp. 1232-1234; Ibn Sa`d, *at-Tabaqát,* vol. 1, Part 1, pp. 153-154; Ibn Hishám, *as-Sírah,* vol. 2, pp. 124-128; Ibn al-Athír, *Usd al-ghábah,* vol. 4, p. 25; al-Kámil, vol. 2, pp. 101-104; Ibn Kathír, *at-Tafsír,* vol. 2, pp. 302-303; *at-Tárikh,* vol. 3, pp. 180-181; Ibn Abi'l-hadíd, vol. 13, pp. 303-306; as-Suyútí, *ad-Durr al-manthúr,* vol. 3, pp. 179-180; al-`Allámah al-Majlisí, *Bihár al-anwár,* vol. 19, pp. 28-103).

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SERMON 235

About collecting provision for the next world while in this world and performing good acts before death

Perform (good) acts while you are still in the vastness of life, the books are open (for recording of actions), repentance is allowed, the runner away (from Alláh) is being called and the sinner is being given hope (of forgiveness) before the (light of) action is put off, time expires, life ends, the door for repentance is closed and angels ascend to the sky.

Therefore a man should derive benefit from himself for himself, from the living for the dead, from the mortal, for the lasting and from the departer for the stayer. A man should fear Alláh while he is given age to live upto his death, and is allowed time to act. A man should control his self by the rein and hold it with its bridle, thus by the rein he should prevent it from disobedience towards Alláh, and by the bridle he should lead it towards obedience to Alláh.

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SERMON 236

About the two arbitrators (Abú Músá al-Ash`arí and `Amr ibn al-`ÁS) and disparagement of the people of Syria (ash-Shám).

Rude, low people and mean slaves. They have been collected from all sides and picked up from every pack. They need to be taught the tenets (of Islam), disciplined, instructed, trained, supervised and led by the hand. They are neither *muhájirún* (immigrants from Mecca), nor *ansár* (helpers of Medina) nor those who made their dwellings in the abode (in Medina) and in belief.

Look! They have chosen for themselves one who is nearest of all of them to what they desire, while you have chosen one who is nearest to what you dislike. You may certainly recall that the other day `Abdulláh ibn Qays (Abú Músá) was saying: "It is a mischief, therefore, cut away your bow-string and sheathe your swords." If he was right (in what he said) then he was wrong in marching (with us) without being forced, but if he was lying then he should be viewed with suspicion. Therefore, send `Abdulláh ibn al-`Abbás to face `Amr ibn al-`ÁS. Make use of these days and surround the borders of Islam. Do you not see that your cities are being attacked and your prowess is being aimed at?

*****

SERMON 237

Amír al-mu'minín describes herein the members of the Prophet's family

They are life for knowledge and death for ignorance. Their forbearance tells you of their knowledge, and their silence of the wisdom of their speaking. They do not go against right nor do they differ (among themselves) about it. They are the pillars of Islam and the asylums of (its) protection. With them right has returned to its position and wrong has left its place and its tongue is severed from its root. They have understood the religion attentively and carefully, not by mere heresy or from relaters, because the relaters of knowledge are many but its understanders are few.

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SERMON 238

When `Uthmán ibn `Affán was surrounded,

`Abdulláh ibn al-`Abbás brought a letter to Amír al-mu'minín from `Uthmán in which he expressed the desire that Amír al-mu'minín should leave for his estate Yanbu` so that the proposal that was being mooted out for him to become caliph should subside. `Uthmán had this request earlier also. Upon this Amír al-mu'minín said to Ibn al-`Abbás:

O' Ibn al-`Abbás! `Uthmán just wants to treat me like the water-drawing camel so that I may go forward and backward with the bucket. Once he sent me word that I should go out then sent me word that I should come back. Now, again he sends me word that I should go out. By Alláh, I continued protecting him till I feared lest I become a sinner.

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SERMON 239

Exhorting his men to jihád and asking them to refrain from seeking ease

Alláh seeks you to thank Him and assigns to you His affairs. He has allowed time in the limited field (of life) so that you may vie with each other in seeking the reward (of Paradise). Therefore, tight up your girdles and wrap up the skirts. High courage and dinners do not go together. Sleep causes weakness in the big affairs of the day and (its) darkness obliterates the memories of courage.

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LETTERS

Letter 1

The following is the letter sent by Imam Ali (a) through Imam Husayn (a) and Ammar Yasir to the people of Kufa before he proceeded to Basra for the Battle of Jamal.

This letter is from the servant and creature of Allah, Ali (a), Amir al-Mu'minin, to Kufiyites who are the leaders of Ansar and respectable persons.
After praising Allah and invoking His Blessings on the Holy Prophet (s) I want to throw light on the event of the assassination of Uthman and to make the whole affair as clear as if you were present on the occasion and were witnessing the event yourself.
People were dissatisfied with him and were accusing and blaming him. Out of the Muhajirs I was the only man who wanted to appease and pacify the people and who did not want to indulge in the activities of those dissatisfied persons, while Talha and Zubayr were instigating the populace in such a way that the least they said was worse than the worst that could be asserted or alleged against Uthman. Their whispering campaign was deadlier than the loudest propaganda which could be carried on; Aisha also exhibited extreme annoyance and anger against him. Under such conditions some persons resolved to kill him and they murdered him. Then everybody (friends and foes alike) came to me and took the oath of allegiance to me.
This was done without any desire, instigation, inducement, persuasion or compulsion and force on my part. They came to me of their own free-will, without hesitation, and with pleasure, ecstasy and joy.
Let it be known to you that the people of the city towards which the Holy Prophet (s) had migrated (Madina), is being deserted by its inhabitants, they are leaving it, it is seething with discontentment and rebellion. A seditious campaign has started against the Amir. I want you to come to the help of your Amir to fight against his enemies.

Letter 2

After the conquest of Basra Imam Ali (a) wrote the following letter to the citizens of Kufa.

O' Citizens of Kufa! May the Merciful Lord reward you on His behalf and on behalf of the Ahlul Bayt (Progeny of the Holy Prophet) (a) for obeying their orders and coming to their help. May He reward you more handsomely than He rewards those who obey His commands (because you followed the true path against very heavy odds and in spite of alluring enticements).

You have done your duty. You heard the call of your Amir, responded to it; he called you and you obeyed his orders with zeal and enthusiasm.

Letter 3

Shurayh bin Haarith had been holding an important post during the previous regimes. Imam Ali (a) had also appointed him as a Qadhi (Chief Judge) of Kufa.

It was brought to the notice of Imam Ali (a) that he had purchased a house for himself in the city (rather a costly and expensive house, perhaps more expensive and luxurious than his status demanded and that too rather at a cheaper price).
Imam Ali (a) called him and asked of him: "I am given to understand that you have purchased this house for eighty dinars and a sales deed has also been completed regularizing it with signatures of witnesses".
Shurayh replied, "O Amir al-Mu'minin this is a fact". Hearing this Imam Ali (a) felt annoyed and said to him: "Shurayh be warned that a thing (death) will come to you; it will not take any notice of this sales deed nor will it accept the testimony of the witnesses but it will take you out of this house alone and unattended and will drag you to your grave.
And before such a thing happens, you must think well over the fact whether you have purchased this house with the money which does not belong to you but to somebody else and whether the purchase price was acquired with foul means or it was an ill-gotten wealth, which met its cost, if it was so, then remember that you will part (through death) with this house and in the bargain you will lose your place in Paradise.
If you had come to me prior to this transaction I would have drafted such a sales deed for you that you would not have cared to purchase this property even for a dirham. You know what the transfer deed would have been like, it would have been phrased in the following words:

A humble and powerless creature has purchased this house from another mortal being, its boundaries are as follows: On one side it is bounded by calamities and disasters, on the other side with disappointments and sorrows, on the third side its borders are covered with inordinate and excessive desires ending in failures and on the fourth side it adjoins the misleading and captivating allurements of Satan, and the door of this house opens towards this fourth side.
A man leading his life under the merciless grip of intemperate and disorderly desires has purchased this house from another person who is being relentlessly pursued by death. And for the purchase price he has bargained the glory of an honourably contented and respectable way of living against the detestable life of submitting to every form of humiliation for profits and pleasures. The buyer had not realized what sorrows and degradations he was purchasing and what he was paying in by way of the cost.
His delivery now lies in the hands of One Who throws the bodies of kings into dust and overthrows their empires, Who ends the lives of despots and Who has brought to an end the dominions of Egypt, Persia, Greece, Rome and Himyars, kings of Yemen, Who had destroyed the wealth, power and glory of all those individuals who had amassed wealth, gathered property, built very strong and durable houses, furnished them with the choicest and most costly furniture and surrounded them with beautiful gardens. Those people were imagining that they and their descendants will enjoy the fruits of their labours, though in reality everyone of the house so built or the article so collected will have to be accounted for on the Day of Judgement, the day when people will be rewarded or punished according to their deeds, the day on which evil doers will suffer for their vicious and wicked ways. Your mind will corroborate and confirm this if it is kept free from intemperate ambitions, from lust for alluring things, from sensuality and from vicious affections and attachments.

Letter 4

A letter to one of the commanders of his army.

If our enemies agree to obey us, it will be as I desire, but if they adamantly insist upon dissension and revolt, then be ready to fight against them with the help of your faithful followers. Trust those who have proved themselves faithful. Do not trust and do not count upon the help of those who have proved faithless and disloyal. Remember that the absence of those who do not join us willingly and sincerely is better than their presence in our ranks, and their inactivity and lethargy is better than their participation in our activities.

Letter 5

Ash'ath bin Qays was a hypocrite and time-sever. For sometime he attached himself to Imam Ali (a) pretending to be his sincere follower.

The ulterior motive behind this was to amass wealth and to grasp power. Imam Ali (a) had appointed him as the Governor of Azarbaijan. He started collecting and procuring wealth by every means possible. When this was reported to Imam Ali (a), he wrote the following letter to Ash'ath: On receipt of this letter he wanted to abscond with the wealth so amassed but good counsels prevailed upon him and he was persuaded by Hujr bin Adi Kindi to got to Imam Ali (a). When his accounts were audited he had to surrender 400,000 dirhams.

Verily, you have neither been entrusted with the governorship so that you amass wealth nor is it a tasty and juicy morsel to be swallowed up. On the contrary it is a trust committed to your care and trust. Its responsibility lies upon your shoulders.

Your Amir (meaning Imam Ali himself) has appointed you as a shepherd and a guardian of the people. You have no right to do as you like and to act independently without seeking his advice and permission. In all important affairs of the State and the public, your decisions must be based on true facts and sound reasons. In your control and custody there is one of the treasuries of Allah, you are only a treasurer, you have no right to make personal use of any part of this wealth, it is your duty to pass it on to whom it belongs.

I hope you will not give me a chance to prove myself a hard task-master and a harsh administrator. May you see the light.

Letter 6

The following is a letter to Mu’awiya and in it Imam Ali (a) has used the same principle that he applied on Talha and Zubayr.

Imam Ali (a) in this letter has raised all the points which were once quoted against him. He says if an election on the basis of general franchise is the criterion to decide such a caliphate, then general election took place to elect him the Caliph and nobody can deny this fact, and if limited franchise (Shura) was the criterion then those who represented this group (Muhajirs and Ansars) were amongst those who elected him and therefore even according to the rules formulated by opponents of Imam Ali (a) his election was lawful, regular and bonafide. Thus no Muslim has a right to speak or act against him.

Verily, those who took the oath of allegiance to Abu Bakr, Umar and Uthman have sworn allegiance to me. Now those who were present at the election have no right to go back against their oaths of allegiance and those who were not present on the occasion have no right to oppose me. And so far as Shura (limited franchise or selection) was concerned it was supposed to be limited to Muhajirs and Ansars and it was also supposed that whomsoever they selected, became caliph as per approval and pleasure of Allah. If somebody goes against such decision, then he should be persuaded to adopt the course followed by others, and if he refuses to fall in line with others, then war is the only course left open to be adopted against him and as he has refused to follow the course followed by the Muslims, Allah will let him wander in the wilderness of his ignorance and schism.

O Mu’awiya! I am sure that if you give up self-aggrandizement and self-interest, if you forsake the idea of being alive only to personal profits and pleasures, if you cease to be actuated solely by selfishness and if you ponder over the incident leading to the murder of Uthman, you will realize that I cannot at all be held responsible for the affair and I am the least concerned with the episode. But it is a different thing that you create all these false rumours and carry on this heinous propaganda to gain your ulterior motives. Well you may do whatever you like.

Letter 7

A letter to Mu'awiya, on receiving letters from him based on hypocritical advice and false accusations.

After praising Allah and invoking His Blessings and Peace on the Holy Prophet (s), I write to inform you that I am in receipt of many of your letters which appear to consist of various pieces of advice to me. You have very cunningly tried to couch them in flowery words and phrases. You have done this because of your natural evil-mindedness and because of the envy, enmity and malice you bear against me.
(These kinds of letters show that they have been written from a person who has no inner-light and no benevolent guide to show him the true path. Avarice, self-aggrandizement and lust of power prompted him to do so and he jumped at the suggestion. It is a letter from a person, whom selfishness has led astray and who has lost his sense of proportion and therefore, it contains no sense and no real worth. Some commentators consider the following passage as a part of the letter above:)
Remember that the allegiance and fidelity sworn to me is such that it does not require reconsideration on the part of those who have sworn it nor are they at liberty (from a religious point of view) to go back upon it. Therefore, those who belittle it, scoff at it, or go back upon it are hypocrites and traitors.

Letter 8

Jarir bin Abdullah Bajali was sent to Damascus.

He was carrying a letter for Mu'awiya. Some delay occurred in his return. Imam Ali (a) felt anxious about his safety and wrote the following letter to him:

After praising Allah and the Holy Prophet (s) I want to advise you that as soon as you receive this letter of mine, force Mu'awiya for a reply to my letter written to him. Compel him to come to a decision and to give a final reply. He must decide between two things. Either war or obedience. If it is going to be a war then I shall get ready to fight against him, and if it is going to be peace then you must make him swear the oath of allegiance to me and then you must return.

Letter 9

A letter to Mu'awiya.

Quraysh was our tribe, but they wanted to kill the Holy Prophet (s) and to exterminate our family. They conspired against us and made plots after plots to harm us. They tried their best to frighten and injure us. They forced us to leave our homes and to retire to the cave of Shi'b Abi Taalib. It was a very rough and hard place to live in, and we were forced to lead a very harsh life. Their instigated their tribe as well as other clans to fight against us. The Merciful Allah came to our help. He protected and defended us. From amongst us those who had faith in the Holy Prophet (s) and Islam stood up to defend him and his cause; their desire was to achieve the favour of the Lord; and those of Bani Hashim who had not embraced Islam as yet like Abbas bin Abdul Muttalib also came to our help because we belonged to them and they to us. From amongst the Quraysh, the condition of those who had embraced Islam, was not as bad as ours.
Either they had defensive alliance with the non-believers or some tribes decided to defend them despite their differences in religion. While it was the practice of the Holy Prophet (s) that whenever a battle was raged and his companions behaved cowardly or ran away from the battlefield (as in Badr, Uhud and Hunayn) which was usually the case or started making the Muslims nervous (as in Khandaq), he sent members of his family (Bani Hashim) to fight out the battle to protect his companions. These members of Bani Hashim often fought single handed and some even met martyrdom as for instance, Ubayda bin Haarith was killed in the Battle of Badr, Hamza bin Abdul Muttalib in Uhud and Ja'far bin Abu Taalib in the Battle of Mu'tah. Besides these three, there was another person (here Imam Ali (a) meant himself) who also tried his best to meet martyrdom. I could name him but the date of his death had not yet approached and he passed through these terrible ordeals alive.
O time! O world! How could I wonder at your vagaries? People have started considering such a person (Mu'awiya) equal to me! He in his whole lifetime never exerted himself in the service of Islam and Allah as I have done at every moment of my life. In Islam there is no rank, no honour, no position and no merit for him as there is for me. No one can pretend to claim any superiority and excellence over me but a pretender. I do not know of anyone who served Islam and the Holy Prophet (s) as sincerely and as constantly as I have. The Almighty Lord knows that I am not wrong in claiming what I have said and no one can be compared to me in this respect. All Glory, Praise and Greatness belongs to Him and to nobody else.
You have requested me to send to you all those people who were responsible for the murder of Uthman. I pondered over your request and found that it was not in my power to send them to you or to anybody else.
I swear by my life that if you do not leave your hypocrisy, avarice and your rebellious activities they will make themselves known to you. Instead of your demanding them they will demand for you. On the sea and land and in the plains and on the hills they will make their presence known to you and you will not find it easy or pleasant to face them and will curse the day when you demanded to see them.

Letter 10

A letter to Mu'awiya.

Have you ever seriously considered what would happen to you if all your wealth and property is taken away from you. The possessions, the riches and the luxuries that you have surrounded yourself with, belong to this world, a world which has profusely decorated itself and which is bent upon alluring you with its enjoyments. It has enticed you away and you have fallen an easy prey to its allurements. It has dragged you and you have followed it like a tame animal on the other end of the rope. It has ordered you and you have obeyed its orders submissively.

You have forgotten that shortly you will be called to bear the consequences of such a life; consequences from which no one can shield, liberate or absolve you.

Abstain from such a life, keep yourself ready for the Day of Judgement; be ready for death which is inevitable, bound to come and sure to end every life, rich or poor. Do not listen to the exciting whispers of those who want to tempt you and do not make them believe that they and their heinous whisperings have any importance in your mind.

If you do not faithfully and sincerely follow the dictates of religion and do not act as I have advised you, then I want to warn you of something that you have entirely forgotten. It is that you are unthankful to Allah for all which He has granted to you and you are ungrateful to Him for the Favours bestowed upon you. Satan has taken possession of your soul. Its desire to secure you as his obedient slave, is fully fulfilled. It has a firm hold on your mind.

O Mu'awiya! Were you ever entrusted with the noble status of dispensing peace and justice to mankind? Have you the necessary knowledge for the work? Do you really know the canons of equity and justice as laid down by Islam? You and your ways of government! May Allah protect me from and may withhold me from behaving towards mankind the way you have behaved and from tyranny, exploitations and murders that you commit. Take care! You are being madly driven by the lust of wealth, power and vicious indulgence, you are behaving hypocritically against man and Allah. You shall be damned forever.

You have challenged me to a battle. I accept your challenge. But I have a proposal to make. Why have a war involving murder and bloodshed of thousands of ignorant people? Why be a scourge to mankind? Let us have mercy on them, whether they are sincere and Allah-fearing Muslims, or ignorant, unenlightened and greedy mercenaries misguided and fooled by you. Let there be peace and tranquillity for all the creatures of Allah.

Let us, you and I, have a single combat. Let it be a combat unto death. Let the soldiers of both armies stand aside and let two of us alone combat with each other. Let the world see and realize who is the sinner and who has forgotten Allah and the Day of Judgement. Will you accept this invitation of mine? Have you the courage for it? Are you a man to face death boldly and bravely or are you merely a vampire sucking the blood of others surreptitiously?

Remember Mu'awiya! Though now old I am still Abu al-Hasan, the man who killed your maternal grandfather, your uncle and your brother in single combats in the Battle of Badr. The same sword is still in my hand, the same blood is still flowing in my veins, the same heart is still throbbing in my chest and with the same courage I still face my enemy. Will you come and face me alone?

Remember that I have not introduced any innovation in religion, nor have I insinuated schism. Verily, I sincerely believe in the religion which you pretended to embrace hypocritically with mental reservations and pretensions, a religion which you in your heart of hearts actually hated and which you gave up quickly and cheerfully.

You pretend that you want to avenge the murder of Caliph Uthman. Do you know who actually killed him and who caused his murder? If really you do so, then seek vengeance on them.

I see before me the day when you will be tired of this war, when you will face defeat, when you will find death or disgrace facing you, when I shall scatter your armies, killing your famous but misguided marshals, when I shall thin your ranks and files; then in despondency and despair you will turn towards the Book of Allah, though you will have no faith in it and no belief in the truth preached by it because you and your followers being hypocrites have no faith in Allah, in the Holy Prophet (s) and the Day of Judgement and who have gone back on their promises.

[What a prophecy! It all took place as Imam Ali (a) had prophesied. While facing defeat in the Battle of Siffin, Mu'awiya following Amr bin Aas tied some scraps of paper to the spears of his soldiers and raising them declared that it was the Holy Qur'an and that they wanted the Holy Book to act as an arbitrator between him and Imam Ali (a).]

Letter 11

Part of instructions to his marshal when Imam Ali (a) sent him to a battle.

When you approach an enemy or when he approaches you, make it a point to keep your army on a hilltop or at the foot of a mountain or on the side of a river so that you easily watch the movements of your enemy. Do not involve the whole army in the encounter, allow only a few units to take part in the engagements. If your army is not on a hilltop then post your scouts and guards on high vantage points and along the line of fortification so that the enemy may not take you unawares.
Remember that the commanders of an army are its guardians and the eyes of these commanders are the scouts.
Try to avoid dissensions and do not cause superiority or inferiority complexes to take root among your officers and in your ranks. Wherever and whenever you camp, make it a point that all of your officers and soldiers camp in the same locality and are provided with the same comforts and conveniences and whenever you march, always march in company formation. If you want to rest during the night draw a circular formation of your lancers round your army and do not let sound sleep overpower you.

Letter 12

When Imam Ali (a) sent an expedition of 3000 soldiers under Ma'qil bin Qays Riyahi against the Syrians, he issued the following instructions.

Always keep the fear of Allah in your mind. Remember that you have to meet Him one day (let the fear of Allah guide you in all your activities against man) and your end will be towards Him and towards none else.

Do not fight against anybody unless he wishes to fight against you. During winters travel in the mornings and give your army a rest in the afternoons. Do rush through journeys (unless absolutely necessary). Travel by easy stages, and do not tire out your army during the journey. Do not travel during the early part of the evening because Allah has meant this to be time for rest and comfort and not for march and exertion, make use of these hours to give rest to your body and mind.

When you have rested then begin your march with trust and faith in Allah in the early hours of the morning.

When you face your enemy, stand in the midst of your army, never alone. Do not be over-anxious to fight and do not behave as if you craving for a combat or aspiring for an encounter, but at the same time do not try to avoid your enemy or to evade an engagement as if you are afraid or nervous. Keep my orders in mind and act accordingly until you get further instructions. Do not let the hatred and enmity of your opponents force you to a combat, do not begin a battle even if the enemy so desires unless you have explored every avenue of amity and good-will and have exhausted all the chances of a peaceful settlement.

Letter 13

Instructions to two of his commanders.

I have appointed Malik bin Harith as chief of the staff over you and the armies under you. Take your orders from him and obey him. Treat him as if he is your shield and armour because there is no risk of laziness or lethargy from him, nor of nervousness and blunders nor of any error of commission and omission.

Letter 14

At Siffin Imam Ali (a) gave the following instructions to his soldiers before the battle.

Do not take the initiative in fighting, let them begin it. It is because by the Favour of Allah you are on the side of truth and justice. Leave them until they begin their hostilities and then you are at liberty to take to fighting. Their keenness to begin a battle will be another proof of your sincere belief in the orders of Allah .
If Allah favours you with success and inflicts defeat to the enemy, then do not attack those who have surrendered, do not injure the disabled and weak, do not assault the wounded, do not excite women and do not make them angry with rude behaviour even if they use harsh and insulting words against your commander and officers because they are physically and mentally weak and get excited easily and frightened quickly. During the days of the Holy Prophet (peace of Allah be upon him and his descendants) we had strict orders not to touch, molest or insult women though they were unbelievers. Even in pre-Islamic days it was the custom that if a man struck a woman even with a stick or a stone, the revenge had to be taken by his sons and descendants.

Letter 15

Whenever Imam Ali (a) faced an enemy he invoked Allah in the following words.

O Lord! Our hearts seek Your Protection, our faces turn to You, our eyes look towards You, our feet move towards Your path and our bodies sincerely submit to Your command. O Lord! Hidden hostilities and concealed spite are exposed, hearts are boiling over with envy and malice. O Lord! We place before You our difficulties, the absence of the Holy Prophet (s) from amongst us, the abundance of enemies, the disappointments and frustrations which face us. O Lord! Let truth prevail and let our people realize justice, honesty and piety of our case.

Letter 16

During a battle Imam Ali (a) used to advise his followers in these words.

Do not allow a retreat to become so disastrous and overpowering as to make it impossible for you to remain firm at the battle. Do not be so disappointed and discouraged with a withdrawal or a defeat as to be unfit for a come back and a resumption of activities. Be bold, be courageous and allow your swords to do their duties and to justify your existence. Attack your enemies furiously and bravely and let them feel the full might of your arms and your hands. Impel and drive yourselves towards a dauntless and heroic courage and towards daring and undismayed use of your armaments. Do not shout but attack with eyes fixed on every movement of your enemy because you will thus dispel nervousness and cowardice.

I swear by the Lord Who allowed a seed to germinate into a plant and Who created these men who are opposing and facing you and who are fighting against you who did not embrace Islam but for securing a safety device for their lives and properties. They were not sincere in embracing Islam. It was done simply to provide for themselves a place in the growing and expanding power and position of the Islamic State. They would keep their paganism hidden to their hearts until they found their supporters and helpers. Only then they would come out openly.

Letter 17

A reply to a letter of Mu'awiya.

You want me to give Syria over to you but remember that what I have previously refused you cannot be handed over to you and I will never consent to your usurpation of the same. You tell me that wars have annihilated the Arabs and very few people are left alive. I must inform you that verily, those, who were killed defending the truth and Islam were martyrs, and they are in Paradise and those who were killed helping paganism or hypocrisy, are now in Hell. But the contention that your position in wars is the same as mine, is very fantastic and ludicrous. The absurdity of your claim is due to the fact that you want to match your doubt and incredulity in the truth of Islam to my sincere belief and faith in it, this you cannot do. Further the Syrians are as keen for these worldly gains as Iraqis are to achieve the favour of Allah and the Holy Prophet (s) [therefore they are so willing to run the hazard of war].
You claim that your clan is also descended from Abd Manaf is true but you must remember, as the history of the Arabs will convince you, that your ancestor, Ummayya was not equal to our ancestor, the famous Hashim, neither Harb, another ancestor of yours, was equal to our Abdul Muttalib who was the defender and the guardian of Makkah nor Abu Sufyan could claim himself equal to Abu Taalib [who defended, guarded and suffered so much for the Holy Prophet (s) and Islam]. What is more, no freed-slave can be considered equal to a Muhajir and one coming from a doubtful lineage cannot claim to be equal to those who come from the noble parentage while there is no similarity between one who follows truth and Islam and one who doubts the truth of Islam. Remember also that the worst descendant is one who follows in the footstep of his ancestor in the way of paganism, hypocrisy and Hell.
We (Bani Hashim) still own the glory of prophethood (having the Holy Prophet (s) from amongst us). Prophethood which brought equality to mankind by lowering the position of mighty and despotic lords and raising the status of oppressed and humiliated persons. When Allah willed the Arabs to embrace Islam, in large numbers they entered its fold willingly or reluctantly. During the days when those who had precedence in embracing Islam were receiving the Blessings of the Lord for this precedence or when those who, on account of unbearable sufferings from the hands of your clan, were forced to migrate from Makkah, you and your family were after wealth and power. Some of you embraced Islam to better your position because Muslims were gaining ascendancy and supremacy and some others became Muslims because after having harmed and wronged the Muslims in the early days of Islam, you felt that the only way to protect yourself from their vengeance was to profess their religion, though outwardly and hypocritically.
Fear Allah and do not let Satan influence your mind and body and do not give it a way into your soul.

Letter 18

When Abdullah bin Abbas was the Governor of Basra, Imam Ali (a) wrote the following letter to him.

The cause of this letter was the behaviour of Ibn Abbas towards the clan of Bani Tamim. Ibn Abbas hated them because some of them had sided with Talha and Zubayr in the Battle of Jamal and therefore, he had on occasions treated them scornfully. They reported this matter to Imam Ali (a) requesting that the whole clan should not be treated badly because of the folly of a few. This letter shows what a kind rule it was that Imam Ali (a) wanted to introduce.

Understand very well Ibn Abbas that Basra is a satanic place. It is an abode of strifes and bloodshed. So be kind and tolerant towards the citizens of Basra. Win them over with kindness, sympathy and sincerity. Remove fear, suspicion, distrust and animosity from their minds. I am given to understand that you have ill-treated the clan of Bani Tamim and have insulted them.

Remember that Bani Tamim is such a clan that their star has not set as yet, amongst them if one great man dies there is another to take his place. Remember that after embracing Islam and even during pre-Islamic days these people were never regarded as mean, jealous or covetous. On the contrary, they had a very high status. Besides they have claims of kinship and friendship with us. If we behave kindly, patiently and sympathetically towards them Allah will reward us. But if we ill-treat them we shall be sinning.

May Allah have mercy upon you, Ibn Abbas! Be careful about your behaviour towards those over whom you are ruling, be kind to all and be careful about your tongue and your behaviour because you are ruling there on my behalf and your actions are those of mine and I am responsible for them. I have a good opinion about you, please try to be such that I may not be forced to change it.

Letter 19

The following is a letter to one of his governors. It speaks volumes about the ways of Divine Rule.

It shows how Imam Ali (a) was training the Muslims to behave tolerantly towards other religions, how minority was to be treated and what should those who hold a different creed, expect of a Muslim ruler.

After invoking Allah and praising the Holy Prophet (s) be it known to you that villagers and farmers of the provinces under you, complain of your harshness, arrogance and cruelty. They complain that you consider them mean, humble and insignificant and treat them scornfully. I deliberated over their complaint and found that if, on account of their paganism they do not deserve any favourable treatment of extra privileges, they do not deserve to be treated cruelly and harshly either. They are governed by us, they have made certain agreements with us and we are obliged to respect and honour the terms of those agreements.

Therefore, be kind to them in future, tolerate them and give them due respect, but at the same time keep your prestige and guard well the position and honour of the authority which you hold. Always govern with a soft but strong hand. Treat them as they individually deserve, kindly or harshly and with respect or with contempt.

Letter 20

The following is a letter from Imam Ali (a) to Ziyad who was appointed as the Commissioner of Basra by Abdullah bin Abbas, the Governor of the provinces of Ahwaz, Basra, Kirman and Fars.

Ziyad was from the very beginning dishonest and corrupt, a man who would not stop short at any vice or sin to gain his end. He had come from a very low family so much so that nobody knew his father's name; his mother was a harlot. Ummul Mu'minin Aisha had nicknamed him as "His father's son" and he was known all over Arabia by this insulting name. But he was a self-made man, a great conspirator. Ibn Abbas had found him a useful officer as he could suppress any voice raised against his government. He appointed him as a commissioner and had recommended him to Imam Ali (a). Imam Ali (a) also gave him a chance and wanted to see whether he could give up his bad ways. But he did not change his behaviour, so Imam Ali (a) dismissed him.

Later on Mu'awiya in his court declared him to be his father's (Abu Sufyaan's) illegitimate son. Ziyad was glad that atleast he could name some big man - though thirty years after the death of that man - to be his father, and thus became a staunch friend of Mu'awiya - his so-called half brother. Imam Ali (a) wrote this letter to Ziyad when he was still the Commissioner of Basra.

I swear by Allah that if I find you misappropriating the wealth of Muslims I will punish you in such a way that you will be left poor. Besides this poverty there will be the burden of sins on your shoulders, you will be disgraced and humiliated, losing your position and prestige.

Letter 21

The following is a letter from Imam Ali (a) to Ziyad.

Give up extravagance and be sparing and moderate in your expenditure. Do not let the pleasures of today make you forget the tomorrow, the Day of Reckoning and Judgement. Keep money with you strictly according to your real requirements and give away the rest to the poor so that it may act as a provision for you in the next world. Do you expect Allah to grant you rewards reserved for courteous, kind and benevolent people, while you actually are proud, vain, haughty and miserly? Do you hope to receive His Blessings reserved for charitable, generous and kind-hearted persons who always help the poor and the needy, while you, rolling in wealth and luxuries, prevent any part of your wealth from reaching the disabled persons and poverty-ridden old widows?

Remember a man receives the reward according to actions he has done in this world because in the next world only the result of such deeds as he has done during his lifetime shall reach him.

Letter 22

Ibn Abbas says that once Imam Ali (a) advised him in the following words, and except for the advice of the Holy Prophet (s) no advice has been so beneficial to him as this.

After glorifying Allah and praising the Holy Prophet (s) let it be known to you, Ibn Abbas, that a man feels very happy if he achieves a thing without understanding that it would have ultimately come to him and he would not have missed it, and sometimes he feels sorry at not acquiring a thing which was not destined for him and which he could never have acquired. Only such things as will earn for you a reward in the next world should please you and you should only feel sorry for losing rewards of the next world. If you attain worldly pomp and pleasures then let not your happiness increase along with every enhancement of such pleasure and if you lose any of these pleasures then do not feel sorry at the loss because you must only feel sorry at the loss of such things as will be of use to you in the next world.

Letter 23

Imam Ali (a) passed the following instructions to his family a little before his martyrdom.

My advice to you is that you should not consider anyone as a co-worker of the Lord, be firm in your belief that there is One and only One Allah. Do not waste the knowledge given to you by the Holy Prophet (s) and do not give up and destroy his Sunnah (traditions). Keep these two pillars of Islam (monotheism and Sunnah of the Holy Prophet (s)) aloft. If you act according to my advice then you cannot be blamed for damaging or destroying the religion.

Until yesterday I was your Amir, today I am only an object from whom you can take lesson and warnings, and tomorrow I shall part company with you. If I survive this fatal wound I shall be at liberty to decide how to treat the man who attempted to kill me. If I die then my worldly life comes to an end. If I forgive my assassin then it will be to gain the Blessings of Allah for forgiving a person who has harmed you, and it will be a good deed if you also forgive him. Do you not desire to be forgiven by the Lord? I swear by Allah that death is not coming to me suddenly and unexpectedly that I may hate or abhor, neither is it such a visitor whom I may refuse to meet. So far as death by martyrdom is concerned I always expected and desired it and I now welcome it like a thirsty person who finds water when he is extremely thirsty. I am a seeker whom martyrdom finds what he was seeking for. To the pious people the best is that which they find with Allah.

Letter 24

The following is the will of Imam Ali (a) in which he has left instructions as to how to treat his property and estate. It was written after his return from the Battle of Siffin.

This is a will of a creature of Allah, Ali son of Abu Taalib (a). It instructs (his heirs) how to spend his property only to gain the Blessings of Allah so that Allah may grant him peace and allow him to enter His Paradise. After me my son Hasan (a) will be the administrator, executor and testator of my property. He can spend it according to the laws of Islam in helping the poor, destitute and the needy in accordance with the canons ordained by Allah. If anything happens to Hasan (a) and Husayn (a) is alive after him, then he will be the next executor and testator and should act according to the spirit of the instructions given herein.

Verily, for the two sons of Fatima (a), Hasan and Husayn (a), the share out of my property is equal to the shares of my other sons (being Imams they should not be barred from taking their share and at the same time their share cannot be more on account of their being administrators and executors). I have appointed sons of Fatima (a) executors to please Allah and out of respect and love that I bear towards the Holy Prophet (a) and his daughter (peace of Allah be upon them and their descendants).

I order the executor to keep this property as it is and to spend the income on the poor and destitute as desired by me. I further order that young date-palm of the estate not to be cut until it is fully afforested with date-palm and take up the shape of a well-developed palm-orchard.

My widows are to be treated with respect and their shares, out of this property, are to be included in the shares of their sons and even if any of them loses her son she will still enjoy her share, she should not be left unhelped to work like a slave-woman for her living.

Letter 25

Directions to assessors and collectors of Zakat.

These directions clearly show what form of regime it was that Imam Ali (a) wanted to introduce. It was not to be a regime whose officers had an upper hand and were fattened on public money. It was to be a regime where the governed and the tax-payers were at premium. It was their convenience for which the State was to function. It was a welfare-state working solely for the welfare of the people living under its rule, a regime where the rich cannot get richer while the poor are made poorer; a regime where canons of religion hold the balance between the governed and the ruler.

Do not give up fearing Allah who has no partner. Do not let the Muslim grieve (over their lot of having you as their ruler) and do not approach them in a way as to make your approach hateful to them. Do not tax them more than what is actually due from them to Allah.

When you reach a group of people (tribe or village) to assess a tax on them, then stay only at their watering-place (a well or water-hole the most convenient place for stay in desert regions) and do not stay in their houses. Then go to them maintaining your dignity and prestige and when you are in their midst, wish them peace and blessings of Allah and show due respect to them. Tell them that the Caliph of Allah has sent you to collect from them their dues to Allah. Ask them whether they possess enough means to pay the dues of Allah that you may gather them and pass them on to His Caliph. If somebody tells you that he does not possess enough wealth to make him liable to pay taxes then do not worry him and accept his plea. If someone tells you that he is in a position to pay Zakat, then go with him to his house, field or pasture (because Zakat was then collected in coins as well as in kind). But do not frighten him or make him nervous and do not behave with them with undue harshness or tyranny. Then accept the gold or silver which he offers. (Here are the instructions regarding the number of cattle to be assessed for Zakat). If he has cows, bulls, goats and camels then do not enter the herd without his permission because most of it belongs to him (it is not part of Zakat). If you have to enter the herd then do not enter like the one who is coming there to take possession of the cattle. Do not tyrannize the owner, do not frighten the cattle so as to make them disperse. Do not make the owner feel anxious or sorry for them. Then divide the herd into two parts and allow the owner to select the one for himself. If he selects one part for keeping himself, then do not object to it. Again divide the part which he has left for the share of Zakat to be selected from out of these two parts, again allow him to select the lot which he wants to retain for himself. Never object to his selection (because it is the assessor who is dividing them in equal lots; therefore, the selection between the two lots should naturally rest with the owner). Continue like that until you arrive at the lot which constitutes the share of Allah (Zakat) then take possession of it.

Even if, in spite of all these precautions, he thinks the division was unfair and unjust, then mix the whole lot and go through the process once again as I have already explained to you till you arrive at the share of Zakat to the satisfaction of everybody concerned. Remember you have not to accept old and diseased camels or such as have their limbs damaged. Entrust this lot only to such person who is honest and who can be trusted and who can guard the property of the Muslims sympathetically till it reaches their ruler and caliph so that it may be distributed equitably among the Muslims. I want to instruct you once again that you should not entrust these goods and animals to anyone who is not honest.

Entrust them to one who is trustworthy and who is of a kind and sympathetic disposition so that he may not treat the animals cruelly and may not starve them or tire them out during the transit.

Instruct him not to separate a she-camel from its young, not to milk it so much that nothing is left for its young one and not to ride them harshly or to overburden them with heavy loads.

He should ride them in turns so that those who have been already ridden may have an easy journey. He should not drive them fast and should avoid harshness. He should always give them enough rest at watering places. They should not be driven through deserts. As far as possible green lands and well-wooded regions should be selected for the passage. Thus every care should be taken so that they reach their destination in healthy and robust condition without having received any harsh and brutal treatment on the way so that I may distribute them according to the Orders of Allah and the Holy Prophet (s). Verily, the collection of the dues of Allah in the way that I have explained to you is a pious deed and a religious duty which will carry its reward before the Lord.

Letter 26

The following are his instructions to Zakat collectors.

I order you to fear Allah in all those affairs and on all those occasions where there is none to witness your actions and deeds or to guide your activities. I order you not to pretend fear of Allah and assume false piety and to go against His Orders secretly. One whose deeds coincide with his words and who is as honest in his secret activities as in open deeds, is the person who has faithfully discharged the duty laid down upon him by the Lord, his honesty handed over the things entrusted to him and has sincerely obeyed Allah only to achieve His Favours and Blessings.

I order you not to meet Muslims as a tyrant or an oppressor, not to ill-treat them and not to calumniate them because they are your brothers in religion and they will help you to collect taxes and to find means and ways to help the poor. Certainly there is a share for you in Zakat but remember that the poor, the destitute and the have-nots also have claim over it.

Verily, I have paid you your share and now you should pay them their shares otherwise there will be many who will complain and protest against you on the Day of Judgement (they will be your enemies on that day). Woe be to the person against whom the poor, the destitute, the beggars and those who have been deprived of their rights of receiving Zakat complain before Allah.

Be it known to you that the person who misappropriates Zakat funds, who will fill his stomach with such amounts, and who harms his religion and injures his conscience with such deeds will be punished and disgraced in this world as well as the next. The worst form of dishonesty is the breach of trust of the public funds (Zakat) and the most despicable example of maladministration is that the Imam should tolerate such forms of dishonesty.

Letter 27

When Imam Ali (a) appointed Muhammad bin Abu Bakr as the Governor of Egypt, he gave him the following instructions.

Treat them (the Egyptians) with respect. Be kind and considerate with them. Meet them cheerfully. Be fair, just and impartial in your dealings so that even the influential persons may not dare take undue advantage of your leniency and the commoners and the poor may not be disappointed in your justice and fair dealings.

O creature of Allah! Remember that the Almighty Lord is going to take an account of everyone of your sins, major or minor and whether committed openly or secretly. If He punishes you for your sins, it will not be an act of tyranny and if He forgives you it will be because of His Great Mercy and Forgiveness.

O creature of Allah! Remember that pious persons passed away from this world after having led a respectable and fruitful life and they are going to be well-rewarded in the next world (when compared with the worldly-minded people they had equal opportunities of gathering fruits of this world and utilized them to the best of their abilities and at the same time kept away from all wicked and vicious ways of life). They did not jeopardize their salvation like worldly-minded persons. They led a more contented, more respectable and happier life than those who lived wickedly. They enjoyed the fruits of their labours and they had more gratifying, sober and healthy experience of the pleasures of life than the rich and the wealthy. They regaled themselves with the joys, the facilities and the bliss of this world as much as the tyrant and vicious people desired to enjoy. Yet while leaving this world they carried with them all that would be of use to them in the next world. While living in this world they enjoyed the happiness of relinquishing its evil ways. They made themselves sure that in the life to come they will be recipient of His Grace and Blessings, their requests will not be turned down and the favours destined for them in Paradise will not be lessened or reduced.

O creature of Allah! Fear the inevitable and unavoidable death which is so near to everybody. Be prepared to meet it. Verily, it will come as the most important and the greatest event of your life; it will either carry unmixed blessings and rewards for you or it will bring in its wake punishments, sufferings, and eternal damnation. There will be no chance of its lessening or redemption or any change for the better. It is for you to decide whether to proceed towards perpetual peace and blessings - Paradise, or towards eternal damnation - the Hell. Remember that life is actually driving you towards death which will meet you if you are ready to face it and which will follow you like a shadow if you try to run away from it.

Death is with you as if it has been twisted and tied round your head in between your hair and life is being rolled away from behind you with each exhalation of your breath, never to be unrolled.

Be afraid of the fire - the Hell, whose depth is fathomless whose intensity is enormous and where new kinds of punishments are constantly being introduced. The Hell is an abode where there is no place for His Mercy and Blessings. Prayers of those who are thrown there will neither be heard nor accepted and there will not be any lessening in their sufferings and sorrows.

If it is possible for you to be sincerely afraid of Allah as well as have sincere faith in His Justice, Mercy and Love of His creatures, then try to hold these two beliefs firmly because a man entertains and cherishes the love, reverence and veneration of Allah in proportion to His fear and awe that develops in his mind.

Verily, among men he who fully believes in His Justice and is afraid of it, as well as likes it expects the best rewards from Allah.

O Muhammad, son of Abu Bakr! Remember that I have entrusted you with the command of the most important section of my army which is Egyptian. Do not allow your whims and passions to overrun your judgement. Keep on guarding and defending your religion and the State given under your trust. Take care that not for a single moment in your life, you incur the Wrath of Allah, to gain the pleasure of any person. Remember that the Pleasure of Allah can substitute the pleasure of everybody else and it will be the most beneficial substitute for you but His Pleasure cannot be substituted by anything. Offer your prayers on time, do not rush through them, and never delay in offering them. Remember that piety and nobleness of all your activities are subject to sincerity and punctuality of your prayers.

Remember that a true Imam and leader cannot be equal to the one who leads humanity towards wickedness and vice and eventually towards Hell nor can there be an equality between a follower of the Holy Prophet (s) and his sworn enemy.

Remember the Holy Prophet (s) said that so far as his followers are concerned he was not afraid of encroachments upon any true Muslim by a heathen because Allah will protect every true Muslim from evil deeds on account of the sincerity of his faith and He will expose and avert the evils introduced by heathens, but he (the Holy Prophet (s)) felt anxious about the activities of hypocrites among Muslims, activities of those outwardly wise and learned people who loudly proclaimed greatness and virtues of their good deeds but who secretly indulged in vices and sins.

Letter 28

The following is a famous reply of Imam Ali (a) to the letter of Mu'awiya. It throws ample light on many phases of the history of Islam from the time of its dawn up to the time of Imam Ali (a).

After glorifying Allah and praising the Holy Prophet (s) let it be known to you that I am in receipt of your letter wherein you write to me that Almighty Allah selected Muhammad (s), the Holy Prophet as the Messenger of His revelations and He helped those companions of the Holy Prophet (s) who sincerely exerted themselves to assist him. Is it not an irony of fate that circumstances have favoured you to such a position that you dare remind us of the Favours which Allah bestowed upon us and the Blessings conferred by Him upon His chosen Prophet (s) who was one of us. You have nothing to do with them and you have no share in these Blessings and Favours.

Your condition is like that of a man who carries dates to the date-growing districts or that of a man who tries to teach archery to the master from whom he has learnt the art. You believe that the best of the people amongst the Muslims are so and so and you have started discussing a subject (superiority of Muhajirs over Ansar) which if it is proved correct will not be of any use to you, will not enhance your status and if it is repudiated, this repudiation will not harm you because you are neither a Muhajir nor an Ansar.

What have you to do with their respective status and prestige? What is that for you if one is considered superior to the other? How are you considered in their affairs? You are a freed and liberated slave, and slaves and their sons, though freed and liberated, cannot aspire to the status of Muhajirs and Ansar and they have no right to introduce unholy classification amongst the Muhajirs and Ansar. Do you realize your limitations? You do not belong to either group, you are a liberated slave and son of liberated parents and you want to introduce an unhealthy division between these two groups.

The false status you have tried to grasp is not going to enhance your prestige (before Allah or the people). Can you not think of remaining at the place where you old hostility towards Islam and the Holy Prophet (s) has kept you? How is the lower status or defeat of one class or a person of that class, to whom you do not belong going to harm you and how is the success or higher status of the other going to do you good? You have gone astray from the straight path and from the real teachings of Islam. Listen! I want to give you a short description of the Blessings of Allah upon us.

A party of Muhajirs met martyrdom. They were killed in the cause of Islam and Allah. everyone of them was blessed by Allah with a status and rank. Out of them those who belonged to my family and tribe, Bani Hashim, were granted an excellent status by Allah. Hamza (the uncle of the Holy Prophet (s) and Imam Ali (a)) received the title of Chief of Martyrs (Sayyid al-Shuhada). The Holy Prophet (s) himself called him by this name after his martyrdom and at his funeral ceremony.

The Holy Prophet (s) recited Takbir ('Allahu Akbar') seventy times as a mark of distinction for him, which is not for any other Muslim. Some Muhajirs lost their hands in the battlefield but when one of us (Ja'far, cousin of the Holy Prophet (s) and brother of Imam Ali (a)) lost both of his hands and died in the battlefield, Allah granted him angelic wings and the Holy Prophet (s) informed us that this martyr received the title of Tayyar (one who flies in Paradise). If Allah had not disapproved man's habit of eulogizing and praising himself, I would have given several such instances which speak of the enhancement of my prestige and status before Allah, instances which are accepted and can be testified by faithful Muslims about which the hearers will have no reason to doubt. Do not be like a man whom the Devil has laid astray. Accept the obvious truth when it faces you.

Listen O' Mu'awiya! We (Ahlul Bayt, the progeny of the Holy Prophet (s)) are unique examples of the creation of Allah. For such a status, we are not under obligation to any person or tribe but the Almighty Allah who granted us these blessings. Human beings have received and will receive perfection through us. The perpetual supremacy and inherent superiority do not prevent us from making contact with human beings or with your clan, we have married amongst you and have established family connections with your (as well as with others) clan, though you do not belong to our class. How can you be our equal when the Holy Prophet (s) belongs to us and Abu Jahl, the worst enemy of Islam was from amongst you.

Asadullah (lit. "the Lion of Allah" - a title of Imam Ali (a)) is from amongst us, while Asadul Ahlaaf (lion of the opposing groups, who had sworn to fight against Islam and the Holy Prophet (s)) was from you.

The two foremost leaders of the youth of Paradise (Imam Hasan (a) & Imam Husayn (a)) are from us and the children of Hell are from you. The best woman in the world (title bestowed by Allah upon Fatima (a)) the beloved daughter of the Holy Prophet (s) is from us, and the slanderer and the wood-carrying woman who tried to spend every hour of her life in doing harm to the Holy Prophet of Islam (s), was your aunt. There are so many other things similar to the few mentioned which praise us and speak ill of your clan and which show how far and superior we are to you.

We were faithful followers of the commandments of Allah and you and your clan always opposed Islam and accepted it out of sheer expediency simply to save yourselves from humiliation and disgrace.

Our sincerity in Islam and our services to its cause are the facts of history and history cannot deny your enmity against Islam and the Holy Prophet (s).
The credit which you want to take away from us and the honour which you want to deprive us of is the one which the Holy Qur'an is carefully guarding for us. It says: "Some relatives are superior and have excellence over others, according to the Book of Allah" [Qur'an, 33:6] and in another place in the very same Book, Allah informs mankind that: "The nearest people to Abraham, are those who follow him and those who follow the Holy Prophet (s) and the true believers. Allah is the guardian of the true believers" [Qur'an, 2:68]. Therefore we hold two excellences: That of close relationship to the Holy Prophet (s) and that of loyally accepting his teachings. Do you know on the day of Saqifa, Muhajirs told Ansar that they were superior to them because they in one way or the other, were related to the Holy Prophet (s) and therefore they deserved the caliphate and with the aid of this argument the Muhajirs carried the day. If success can be achieved with the help of this argument and if it has got a grain of truth in it then according it, we and not you, deserve the caliphate. If not, then the Ansar still hold their claim over the caliphate.
You want to impress the world with the idea that I envied all the previous caliphs and that I was jealous of them. Even if I grant this, I want to know what right and authority have you to ask for an explanation from me? You have no place in religion to talk of such things. You also want to taunt me by saying that when I refused to accept the caliphate of the First Caliph I was dragged like a camel with a rope round my neck and every kind of cruelty and humiliation was leveled against me. I swear by my life that by talking like that you want to bring disgrace to me but you are actually doing the greatest service to me and are disgracing yourself as well as the cause that you pretend to support.
There is no disgrace for a Muslim if he is subjected to tyranny and suppression so long as he is firm in his faith and belief in Allah and religion. This is exactly what I say that every cruelty and tyranny was leveled against me to deprive me of the right which Allah and the Holy Prophet (s) have given me and this is exactly what you do not want to acknowledge and accept. Your taunts against me go a long way to prove that in reality there was no election, it was a coup d'etat followed by brutal force which decided the fate of caliphate by making it neither hereditary nor elective but possessive. I have no desire to go into these details but you brought in the subject and I was forced to explain a few points about it.
Then you have referred to the murder of Uthman, and declaring yourself to be his relative, you claim vengeance and blood (and want me to arrange for it as if I was responsible for the murder). I want to say something about the insinuation and false propaganda carried on by you in this respect.
My reply to you is that first of all you should try and find out who was the arch-enemy of Uthman. Can the arch-enemy be he who offered his help and services to Uthman and Uthman refused to have anything to do with him and told him plainly to go and sit at home as his help was not required and his services were not needed or the worst enemy of Uthman is he whom Uthman asked to come to his succour and who purposely and intentionally delayed the help and allowed the events to take their course till what was to happen. No, these two persons cannot be considered in the same category. I swear by the Omniscient Allah that He very well knows everything as He says in the Holy Book, "Allah certainly knows the people who put obstacles in the path of those who wanted to go to war and also to those who did not stay to face a battle." [Qur'an, 33:18].
I do not want to offer any excuse for having objected to his introducing innovations in religion. If my objections to the introduction of innovation and my advice to him to give it up was considered by him a sin committed by me, then I do not attach any importance to his opinion, because well-wishers are often blamed, and their good advice is misconstrued but they do their duty to man and religion. Allah in the Holy Book repeats the saying of a prophet which appropriately represents my position. He says, "I only intend to reform you as much as I can. My success lies with Allah. I have faith in Him and trust in His help." [Qur'an, 11:88].
Then you have tried to frighten me by saying that there is nothing with you for me and my companions but your sword. Well, Mu'awiya! You made the people laugh at your words, they were feeling very sad and depressed at the standard of mental depravity exhibited by you.
When did you find the sons of Abdul Muttalib (the grandfather of the Holy Prophet (s) and Imam Ali (a)) timid in facing their enemies or getting afraid of brandishing swords?
Just wait a little, you will in the near future have to face the attack of a brave soldier. He will shortly invite you for the encounter you are desiring for. The thing which you apparently wish for is not as far away as you imagine it to be. I am coming towards you with an army of Muhajirs, Ansar and those companions who have sincere faith in me. Theirs is a powerful congregation. Their movements will raise huge clouds of dust (indicating the strength of the army). They are prepared to die or to kill. They believe that the best that could happen to the is to receive the Blessings of the Lord by their good deeds. Sons of those warriors who routed your clan in the Battle of Badr is with them.
The swords of Bani Hashim are with them. And you have already realized the sharpness of these swords when your brother, your maternal uncle, your grandfather and kinsmen were killed (those people were killed by Imam Ali (a) in the battles of Badr and Uhud). These swords are now nearing the despots who have tyrannized the Muslim world.

Letter 29

The following is a letter to the people of Basra.

Your activities revealed your disloyalty to Islam, your enmity towards me and the intense malice you nurse against me, the things which you wanted to conceal and which you knew so well. I have forgiven the offenders and I do not want to punish those whose once faced me in the battlefield and then fled. I have accepted the excuses of those who came back to me repenting. If you again do what you have done once before, if you readopt schism and if once again advice of unwise and wicked people drives you towards animosity against Islam, then remember, I shall chastise you. I shall invade you at the head of my army. If you compel me to that then remember that this invasion will be such that the Battle of Jamal will look like a child's play when compared to it.

I know you all and appreciate the sincerity of those who are faithful to me and the excellence of those who come to me with their sincere advice and good wishes. I am willing to forgive and to forget those who have wronged me and to requite those who have exhibited fidelity towards me.

Letter 30

A Letter to Mu'awiya.

Fear Allah in respect of the responsibilities you hold and the power and authority that you command. Deeply deliberate over the duties that Allah has laid down upon you, each one of them is His due which should be respectfully rendered. Try to learn and understand that for which you have no right to plead ignorance.

Remember that there are clear modes, honest means, bright ways, rational procedures, sensible manners, pious methods of faithfully carrying out His orders and obeying His commands and there are innumerable gains and unlimited advantages in that way of life. Wise people adopt those ways and follow them but only fools refuse to accept His advice. Whoever turns away from Allah actually turns away from the realities of life and dictates of wisdom and, therefore, he wanders in the wilderness of ignorance.

The Almighty Allah will take away His Blessings from him and will send His Wrath upon him.

For the sake of yourself be afraid of self-aggrandizement, self-glorification and selfishness. The Merciful Allah has shown you the correct way of leading an honest and a virtuous life and has clearly pointed to you the place where life and its activities are going to end.

Beware that your vicious desire of gaining everything for yourself has landed you in a maze of wickedness and crime, it has forcefully driven you to the folds of vices and sins, it has made it easy for you to achieve your eternal damnation and has rendered it impossible for you to follow the path of virtue and to attain salvation.

Letter 31

After returning from the Battle of Siffin, Imam Ali (a) gave certain pieces of advice to one of his sons.

Some historians consider him to be Imam Hasan (a) while others are of the opinion that he was Muhammad Hanafiya. He wrote them in the form of a will. They deal with almost every aspect of life which goes a long way to make a man successful in life - brave, humane, generous, virtuous and pious.

These exhortations are from a father who realizes the morality of life, who is getting old, who has patiently borne reverses and calamities, who hates inordinate desires and has overcome them, and who is shortly going to pass out of this world, to his son who is young, who has the desire of leading the world to sober ways of thinking and better ways of life, a desire which is rather difficult to be achieved, a son, who is mortal and is bound by nature to follow the steps of all mortals, is subject to ailments, is surrounded by misfortunes and calamities, has to face oppressions and tyrannies, has often to confront with and sometimes to tolerate hypocrisy, deceit, guile, duplicity and treason and who is to end his life in death, is to bear sufferings, is the heir to a person who is dead and gone and who finally ended his life as a martyr to the animosity of his enemies. (What a prophecy!)

Let it be known to you that decay of health, passing away of time and nearness of death, have made me realize that I should give more thought to my future (next world) and to my people; advise them more and spend more time in equipping them mentally to face this world. I felt that my own sons and my near ones have as much right to utilize my experiences and knowledge, all the ups and downs of life, all the realities and all the truths about life in this world and in the Hereafter, which are as much known to me as others. I decided, therefore, to spend more time over you and to prepare you more for your. This was neither selfishness nor self-esteem nor any mental luxury of giving away pieces of advice, but it was the sincere desire of making you see the world as I found it, look at the realities of lives as I looked at them, and do the right thing at the right time and right place as it should be done which made me write down these exhortations to you. You will not find in them anything but truth and realities.

My dear son! You are part of my body and soul and whenever I look at you I feel as if I am looking at myself. If any calamities befalls you, I feel as if it has befallen me. Your death will make me feel as if it was my own death. Your affairs are to me like my own affairs. Therefore, I committed these pieces of advice to paper. I want you to take care of them, to pay attention to them and to guard them well. I may remain longer in your life or I may not, but I want these pieces of advice to remain with you always.

My first and foremost advice to you, my son, is to fear Allah. Be His obedient servant. Keep His thought always fresh in your mind. Be attached to and carefully guard the principles (Islam) which connect you with Him. Can any other connection be stronger, more durable and more lasting than this to command greater respect and consideration or to replace it?

Accept good exhortations and refresh your mind with them. Adopt piety and kill your inordinate desires with its help. Build your character with the help of true faith in religion and Allah. Subjugate your nature with the vision of death, make it see the mortality of life and of all that it holds dear, force it to realize the actuality of misfortunes and adversities, the changes of circumstances and times and compel it to study the lives of past people. Persuade it to see the ruined cities, the dilapidated palaces, decaying signs and relics of fallen empires of past nations. Then meditate over the activities of those people, what they have all done when they were alive and were in power, what they achieved, from where they started their careers; where, when and how they were brought to an end, where they are now; what have they actually gained out of life and what was their contributions to the human welfare.

If you carefully ponder over these problems, you will find that each one of those people has parted company with the others and with all that he cherished and loved and he is now in a solitary abode, alone and unattended; and you also will be like him.

Take care to provide well for your future abode. Do not barter away eternal blessing for pleasures of this mortal and fleeting world.

Do not talk about things which you do not know. Do not speculate about and pass verdicts on subjects about which you are not in a position to form an opinion and are not called upon to do so. Give up the way where there is a possibility of your going astray. When there is danger on your wandering in the wilderness of ignorance, possibility of losing the sight of the goal which you want to attain and of reaching the end aimed at, then it is better to give up the quest than to advance facing uncertain dangers and unforeseen risks.

Advise people to do good and to live virtuously because you are fit to give such advice. Let your words and deeds teach the world lessons of how to abstain from wickedness and vicious deeds. Try your best to keep away from those who indulge in vices and sins.

Fight, whenever required, to defend the cause of Allah. When you think of defending the cause of Allah do not be afraid that people will laugh at you, censure your action or slander you. Fearlessly and boldly help truth and justice. Bear patiently the sufferings and face bravely the obstacles which come in your way when you follow truth and when you try

to uphold it. Adhere to the cause of truth and justice wherever you find it. Try to be well versed with Islamic Jurisprudence and theology and acquire a thorough knowledge of the canons of this religion.
Develop the habit of patience against sufferings, calamities and adversities. This virtue of patience is one of the highest values of morality and nobility of character and it is the best habit which one can develop. Trust in Allah and let your mind seek His protection in every calamity and suffering because you will thus entrust yourself and your affairs to the Best Trustee and to the Mightiest Guardian. Do not seek help or protection from anybody but Allah. Reserve your prayers, your requests, your solicitations, your supplications, and your entreaties to Him and Him alone because to grant, to give, to confer and to bestow, as well as to withhold, to deprive, to refuse, and to debar, lies only in His Power. Ask as much of His Blessings and seek as much of His Guidance as you can.
Try to understand my exhortation, ponder over them deeply; do not take them lightly and do not turn away from them because the best knowledge is that which benefits the listener. The knowledge which does not benefit anybody is useless, not valuable and not worth learning and remembering.
My dear son! When I realized that I was getting old and when I felt that weakness and feebleness are gradually creeping into me then I hastened to advise you as to the best ways of leading a noble, virtuous and useful life. I hated the idea that death should overtake me before I tell you all that I wanted to tell or before my mental capacities like my bodily strength are weakened. I convey all this to you lest inordinate desires, temptations and inducement should start influencing you, or adverse changes of times and circumstances should drag your name in the mire or I should leave you like an untrained colt because a young and fresh mind is like a virgin soil which allows things sown in it to grow verdantly and to bear luxuriantly.
Then, I have made use of early opportunities to educate you and train you before your mind loses its freshness, before it gets hardened or warped, before you start facing life unprepared for the encounter, and before you are forced to use your decisions and discretions without gaining advantages of cumulated traditions, collected knowledge and experiences of others. These words of advice and counsels that I give you, will save you from the worry of acquiring knowledge, gathering experiences and soliciting advice from others. Now you can easily make use of all the knowledge which men have to acquire with great care, trouble and patience. Things which were hidden from them and which only experiments, experiences and sufferings could bring to light are now made easily available to you through these exhortations.
My dear son! Though the span of my life is not as that of some other people who have passed away before me yet I took great care to study their lives, assiduously I went through their activities, I contemplated over their deliberations and deeds, I studied their remains, relics and ruins, I pondered over their lives so deeply that I felt as if I have lived and worked with them from early ages of history down to our times and I know what did them good and what brought harm to them. Sifting the good from bad I am concentrating within these pages, and for your good, the knowledge that I so gathered. Through these pieces of advice I have tried to bring home to you the value of honest-living and high-thinking and the dangers of a vicious and sinful life, I have taken care to cover and guard every aspect of your life as it is the duty of a kind, considerate and loving father.
From the very beginning, I took care to help you to develop a noble character and to fit you for the life which you will have to lead, to let you grow up to be a young man with a noble character, an open and honest mind and clear and precise knowledge of things around you. Originally my desire was only to teach you the Holy Book thoroughly, to make you understand its intricacies, to impart to you the complete knowledge of His commandments and interdictions and not to leave you at the mercy of the knowledge of other people.
But after having succeeded in this task I felt nervous that I may leave you untrained and uneducated in the subjects which themselves are subject to so much confusion and so many contradictions. These are the subjects whose confusions have been made worse confounded by selfish desires, warped minds, wicked ways of life and sinful modes of thinking. Therefore, I have noted down, in these lines, the basic principles of nobility, piety, truth and justice.
You may feel them to be over-bearing and harsh but my desire is to equip you with this knowledge instead of leaving you unarmed to face the world where there is every danger of loss and damnation.
As you are a noble, virtuous and pious young man, I am sure you will receive Divine Guidance and Succour. I am sure He will help you to achieve your aim in life. I want you to promise to yourself to follow my advice carefully.
Remember my son! The best out of these pieces of advice of mine are the those which tell you to fear Allah, to concentrate and to confine yourself to the performance of those duties which have been made incumbent upon you by Him and to follow in the footsteps of your ancestors (The Holy Prophet (s) & Imam Ali (a)) and your pious and virtuous relationship. Verily, they always carefully measured their thoughts and deeds, as you must also try to do and they carefully thought over the subject before saying anything about it or before doing a deed. You should also follow the same.
This kind of deliberation made them take from life what was really the best and forsake that which was not made incumbent upon them or which was not the best. If your mind refuses to accept my advice and you persist to try your own experiments like them then you are at liberty to arrive at your conclusions but only after thoroughly studying the subject and after acquiring the knowledge necessary for such decisions. You must not allow uncertainties and doubt poison your mind, scepticism or irrational likes and dislikes should not affect your views. But remember that before you

start thinking and deliberating over a problem seek guidance of the Lord and beseech Him to give you a lead in the right direction. Avoid confusion in your ideas, and do not let disbelief take hold of your mind because the first will lead you to agnosticism and the others towards errors and sins. When you are thus prepared to solve any problem and you are sure that you possess a clear mind, a sincere and firm desire to reach the truth, to say the correct thing and to do the correct deed, then carefully go through the advice that I am leaving for you.
If your mind is not clear and it is not as free from doubts as you wish it to be, then you will be wandering in the wilderness of uncertainties and errors like a camel suffering from night-blindness. Under these circumstances it is best for you to give up the quest because with such limitations none can ever reach the truth.
My dear son! carefully and very carefully remember these sayings of mine. The Lord who is the Master of death is also the Master of life. The Creator is the Annihilator. And the One who annihilates has the power to bring everything back again to existence. The One who sends calamities has also the power to protect you from them.
Remember that this world is working under the laws ordained by Him, and it consists of assemblage and aggregation of actions and reactions, causes and effects, calamities and reverses, pains and pleasures and rewards and punishments, but this is not all which the picture depicts, there are things in it which are beyond our ken, things which we do not and cannot know and things which cannot be foreseen and foretold, for example the rewards and punishments on the Day of Judgement. Under these circumstances, if you do not understand a thing, do not reject it. Remember that your lack of understanding is due to insufficiency of your knowledge. Remember that when you came into this world your first appearance was that of an ignorant, uneducated and unlearned being. Then you gradually acquired knowledge, but there were several things which were beyond your knowledge, which perplexed and surprised you, and about which you did not understand. Gradually you acquired knowledge about some of those subjects and in future your knowledge and vision may further expand.
Therefore, the best thing for you to do is to seek guidance of One who has created you, Who maintains and nourishes you, Who has given you a balanced mind and a normally working body. Your invocations should be reserved for Him only, your requests and solicitations should be alone to Him and you should only be afraid of Him.
Be it known to you, my son, that nobody has given mankind such detailed information about Allah as our Holy Prophet (s). I advise you to have faith in his teachings, to make him your leader and to accept his guidance for your salvation. Thus advising you I have done the best that I can do as a sincere and loving adviser and I assure you that however you may try to find a better way for your good, you will not find any superior to the one advised by me.
Remember, my son, had there been any other god, besides the One, he would have also sent his messengers and prophets and they would have pointed out to mankind the domain and glory of this second god, and you would have also seen them. But no such incident ever took place. He is One Allah whom we should all recognize and worship. He has explained Himself. Nobody is a partner to Him in His Domain, Might and Glory. He is Eternal, has always been and shall always be. He existed even before the Universe came into being but there is no beginning to His Existence. He shall remain when every other thing shall vanish, and there shall be no end to His Existence. His Glory and His Existence is so supreme, pre-eminent, transcendent, incomparable and excellent that it is beyond the grasp of intellects. No one can understand or visualize Him.
When you have accepted these facts then your behaviour, so far as His commands are concerned, should be that of a person who realizes that his status, power and position is nothing when compared to that of His Lord; who wants to gain His Blessings through prayers and obedience, who fears His Wrath as well as His Punishments and who absolutely in need of His Help and Protection. Remember, my son, Allah has not ordered you to do anything but that which is good and which propagates goodness and He has not prohibited you from anything but that which is bad and will bring about bad effects.
My dear son, through this message of mine, I have explained everything about this world, how fickle and fleeting is its attitude, how short-lived and evanescent is everything that it holds or offers about and how fast it changes its moods and favours. I have also explained about the life to come, the pleasures and blessings provided there, and the everlasting peace, comfort and happiness arranged for in Paradise.
I have given enough examples of both aspects of life, before and after death so that you may know the reality and lead your life on the basis of that knowledge.
As a matter of fact those people who have carefully studied the condition of life and the world, pass their days as if they know that they are travellers, who have to leave a place which is famine-stricken, unhealthy and uncongenial, and they have to proceed towards lands which are fertile, congenial, and where there is abundant provision of all comforts and pleasures. They have eagerly taken up the journey, happy in the hope of future blessings and peace. They have willingly accepted the sufferings, troubles and hazards of the way, parting of friends, scarcity of food and comfort during the pilgrimage so that they may reach the journey's end - a happy place. They do not refuse to bear any discomfort and do not grudge any expenditure by way of giving out alms and charities, and helping the poor and the needy.
Every step which they put forward towards their goal, however tiring and exhausting it may be, is a happy event of their lives. On the contrary the condition of those people who are solely engrossed in this world and are sadly engulfed in its short-lived, quickly fading and vicious pleasures, is like that of travellers who are staying in fertile and happy regions and who have to undertake a journey, knowing fully well that the journey is going to end in a rough, arid and infertile

land. Can anything be more loathsome and abhorring to them than this journey? How they would hate to leave the place where they are and to arrive at a place which they so much hate and which is so dismaying, dreadful and horrifying!
My dear son, so far as your behaviour with other human beings is concerned, let your 'self' act as scales to judge its goodness or wickedness. Do unto others as you wish others to do unto you.
Whatever you like for yourself, like for others, and whatever you dislike to happen to you, spare others from such happenings. Do not oppress and tyrannize anybody because you surely do not like to be oppressed and tyrannized. Be kind and sympathetic to others as you certainly desire others to treat you kindly and sympathetically. If you find objectionable and loathsome habits in others, abstain from developing those traits of character in yourself. If you are satisfied or feel happy in receiving a certain kind of behaviour from others, you may behave with others in exactly the same way. Do not speak about them in the same way that you do not like others to speak about you. Do not speak on a subject about which you know little or nothing, and if you at all want to speak on anything or about anyone of whom you are fully aware, then avoid scandal, libel and aspersion as you do not like yourself to be scandalized and scorned in the same manner.
Remember, son, that vanity and conceit are forms of folly. These traits will bring to you serious harm and will be a constant source of danger to you. Therefore, lead a well-balanced life (neither be conceited nor suffer from inferiority complex) and exert yourself to earn an honest living. But do not act like a treasure for somebody (do not be miserly so that you leave what you hoard for others). And whenever you receive guidance of the Lord to achieve a thing you desire, then do not get proud of your achievement but be humble and submissive to Him and realize that your success was due to His Mercy.
Remember my son, that before you is a long and arduous journey (life). The journey is not only very long, exhausting and onerous but the route is mostly through dismal, dreary and deserted regions where you will be sadly in need of refreshing, renovating and enlivening aids and helps and you cannot dispense with such provisions as to keep you going and to maintain you till the end of the journey - the Day of Judgement.
But remember not to overload yourself (do not entrust yourself with so many obligations and duties that you cannot honourably fulfil them or with such luxurious life as to be wicked and vicious).
Because if this load is more than what you can conveniently bear then your journey will be very painful and tiresome to you. If you find around you such poor, needy and destitute people who are willing to carry your load for you as far as the Day of Judgement then consider this to be a boon, engage them and pass your burden on to them. (Distribute your wealth amongst the poor, destitute and the needy, help others to the best of your ability and be kind and sympathetic to human beings). Thus relieve yourself from the heavy responsibility and liability of submitting an account on the Day of Judgement of how you have made use of His Bounties (of health, wealth, power and position) and thus you may arrive at the end of the journey, light and fresh, have enough provision for you there (reward of having done your duty to man and Allah in this world).
Have as many weight-carriers as you can (help as many as you can) so that you may not miss them when you very badly need them (when your sins of commission and omission will be balanced against your good deeds you must have enough good deeds to turn the scale in your favour). Remember that all you give out in charities and good deeds are like loans which will be paid back to you. Therefore, when you are wealthy and powerful, make use of your wealth and power in such a way that you get all that back on the Day of Judgement, when you will be poor and helpless. Be it known to you, my son, that your passage lies through an appallingly dreadful valley (death or grave) and extremely trying and arduous journey.
Here a man with light weight is far better than an over-burdened person and one who can travel fast will pass through it quickly than the one whose encumbering forces go slowly. You shall have to pass through this valley.
The only way out of it is either in Paradise or in Hell. Therefore, it is wise to send your things there beforehand so that they (good deeds) reach there before you, prearrange for the place of your stay before you reach there because after death there is no repentance and no possibility of coming back to this world to undo the wrong done by you.
Realize this truth, my son, that the Lord who owns and holds the treasures of Paradise and the earth has given you permission to ask and beg for them and He has promised to grant your prayers. He has told you to pray for His Favours that they may be granted to you and to ask for His Blessings that they may be bestowed upon you. He has not appointed guards to prevent your prayers reaching Him. Nor is there any need for anybody to intercede before Him on your behalf.
If you go back upon your promises, if your break your vows, or start doing things that you have repented of, He will not immediately punish you nor does He refuse His Blessings in haste and if you repent once again He neither taunts you nor betrays you though you may fully deserve both, but He accepts your penitence and pardons you. He never grudges His Forgiveness nor refuses His Mercy, on the contrary He has decreed repentance as a virtue and pious deed. The Merciful Lord has ordered that every evil deed of yours will be counted as one and a good deed and pious action will be rewarded tenfold. He has left the door of repentance open. He hears you whenever you call Him. He accepts your prayer whenever you pray to Him. Invoke Him to grant you your heart's desire, lay before Him the secrets of your heart,

tell Him about all the calamities that have befallen you and misfortunes which face you, and beseech His help to overcome them. You may invoke His Help and Support in difficulties and distresses.
You may implore Him to grant you long life and sound health, you may pray to Him for prosperity and you may request Him for such favours and grants that none but He can bestow and award.
Think over it that by simply granting you the privilege of praying for His Favours and Mercies, He has handed over the keys of His treasures to you. Whenever you are in need you should pray and He will confer His Bounties and Blessings. But sometimes you will find that your requests are not immediately granted, then you need not be disappointed because the grant of prayers often rests with the true purpose and intention of the implorer. Sometimes the prayers are delayed because the Merciful Lord wants you to receive further rewards for patiently bearing calamities and sufferings and still believing sincerely in His Help. Thus you may be awarded better favours than you requested for. Sometimes your prayers are turned down, and this is also in your interest; because you often, unknowingly, ask for things that are really harmful to you. If your requests are granted they will do you more harm than good and many of your requests may be such that if they are granted they will result in your eternal damnation. Thus the refusal to accede to your solicitations is a blessing in disguise to you. But very often your requests, if they are not really harmful to you in this life or in the Hereafter, may be delayed but they are granted in quantities much more than you had asked for, bringing in more blessings in their wake than you could ever imagine. So you should be very careful in asking Allah for His Favour. Only pray for such things as are really beneficial to you, and are lasting and in the long run do not end in harm. Remember, my dear son, that wealth and power (if you pray for them) are such things that they will not always be with you and may bring harm to you in the life in the Hereafter.
Be it known to you, my son, that you are created for the next world and not for this. You are born to die and not to live forever. Your stay in this world is transient. You live in a place which is subject to decay and destruction. It is a place where you will have to be busy getting ready for the next world. It is a road (to the next world) on which you are standing. Death is following you. You cannot run away from it. However hard you may try to avoid it, it is going to catch you sooner or later. Therefore take care that it may not catch you unawares or when you are not prepared for it, and no chance is left to you to repent the vices and sins committed and to undo the harm done by you. If death catches you unawares, then you are eternally damned. Therefore, my dear son, always keep three things in mind: death, your deeds and the life in the Hereafter. In this way you will always be ready to face death and it will not catch you unawares.
My dear son, do not be carried away and be allured by the infatuations of the worldly people in the vicious life and its pleasures, and do not be impressed by the sight of their acute struggle to possess and own this world. Allah has very mercifully explained to you everything about this world. Not only the Merciful Lord but also the world has also told you everything; it has disclosed to you that it is mortal; it has openly declared its weakness, its shortcomings and its vices. Remember that these worldly-minded people are like barking dogs and hungry and ferocious beasts. Some of them are constantly barking at others. The mighty lords kill and massacre the poor and the weak.
Their powerful persons exploit and tyrannize the powerless. Their inordinate desires and their greed has such a complete hold over them that you will find some of them like animals tamed and tied with a rope round their feet and necks. (They have lost the freedom of thought and cannot come out of the enslavement of their desires and habits). While they are others whom wealth and power have turned mad. They behave like unruly beasts, trampling, crushing and killing their fellow beings, and destroying things around them. The history of this world is merely a reward of such incidents, some big and some small, the difference is of might but the intensity is the same. These people have lost the balance of their minds. They do not know what they are doing and where they are going, scan their activities and study their ways of thinking and you will find them confused and irrational, they appear like cattle wandering in a dreary desert where there is no water to drink and no fodder to eat, no shepherd to cater for them and no guardian to look after them. What has actually happened to them is that the vicious world has taken possession of them, it is dragging them wherever it likes, and is treating them as if they are blind because it has in reality blind-folded them against Divine light of true religion.
They are wandering without reasonable aims and sober purposes in the bewitching show that the world has staged for them, they are fully intoxicated with the pleasures amassed around them. They take this world to be their god and nourisher. The world is amusing them and they are amused with it and have forgotten and forsaken everything else. But the nights of enjoyments and pleasures will not last long for anybody, the dawn of realities will break sooner or later. The caravan of life will surely reach its destination one day. One who has nights and days acting as piebald horses for him, carrying him onward and onward towards his journey's end must remember that though he may feel as if he is stopping at one place yet actually he is moving on, he is proceeding to his destination. Everyday is carrying him a step further in his journey towards death.
Be it known to you, my son, that you cannot have every wish of yours granted, you cannot expect to escape death, and you are passing through your days of life as others before you have passed. Therefore, control your expectations, desires and cravings. Be moderate in your demands. Earn your livelihood through scrupulously honest means. Be contented with what you get honestly and honourably. Have patience and do not let your desires drive you madly because there are many desires which will lead you towards disappointments and loss. Remember that every beggar or everyone who prays for a thing will not always get what he begs or prays for and everyone who controls his desire, has

self-respect and does not beg or pray for things, will not always remain unlucky or disappointed. So, do not bring down your self-respect, do not be mean and submissive and do not subjugate yourself through these vile and base traits though they may appear to make it possible for you to secure your hearts desires because nothing in this world can compensate for the loss of self-respect, nobility and honour.
Take care, my son! Be warned that you do not make yourself a slave of anybody. Allah has created you a freeman. Do not sell away your freedom in return of anything. There is no actual gain and real value in benefits that you derive by selling your honour and self-respect or by subjugating yourself to disgrace and insults as there is no real good in wealth and power that you acquire by foul means.
Beware, my son, that avarice and greed may not drive you towards destruction and damnation. If you can succeed in having nobody as your benefactor but Allah, then try your best to achieve this nobility because He will grant you your share whether you try to taunt your donors, patrons and benefactors or not.
Remember that the little which is given to you by Allah is going to be more useful and serviceable to you and is more honourable and respectable than what is granted by man in abundance. And what can a man give you but part of that which Allah has granted him?
The losses that you suffer on account of your silence can be easily compensated but the losses which arise out of excessive and loose talk are difficult to requite. Do you not see that the best way of guarding water in a water-bay is to close its mouth.
To guard what you already possess is better than to beg from others.
The bitterness of disappointment and poverty is in reality sweeter than the disgrace of begging.
Returns of hard but respectable labour of a craft or profession, though small in quantity, are better than the wealth which you amass through sin and wickedness.
Nobody can guard your secrets better than you.
Often a man tries his best to acquire a thing which is most harmful to him.
One who talks too much makes most mistakes.
One who often reflects, develops his foresight.
By keeping company with good people, you will develop your character and by avoiding the society of wicked persons, you will abstain from wickedness.
Livelihood acquired by foul means is the worst form of livelihood.
To oppress a weak and helpless person is the worst form of ferocity.
If your kindness or indulgence is going to bring forth cruel results, then severity of strictness is the real kindness.
Often medicating results in disease; sometimes diseases prove to be health preservers.
Often you obtain warnings and advice from people who are not fit to warn and advise you and often you come across advisers who are not sincere.
Do not rely on vain hopes because vain hopes are assets of fools and idiots.
Wisdom is the name of the trait of remembering experiences and making use of them. The best experience is the one which gives the best warning and advice.
Take advantage of opportunities before they turn their backs on you.
Everyone who tries cannot succeed.
Everyone who departs this life will not return.
The worst form of follies is to waste opportunities of this life as well as to lose salvation.
For every action there is a reaction.
Shortly you will get what has been destined for you.
There is an element of risk and speculation in every trade as well as danger of loss.
Often small returns prove as beneficial as big profits.
An accessory of an accomplice who insults you and a friend who has not formed a good opinion of you will not be of any help or use to you.
Treat those with consideration and kindness over whom you have power and authority.
Do not run the risk of endangering yourself through irrational, unreasonable and extravagant hopes.
Take care so as not to be fooled by flattery.
Do good to your brother when he is bent upon doing harm to you. When he ignores or declines to recognize the kinship, befriend him, go to his help and try to maintain relations. If he is miserly with you and refuses to help you, be generous with him and support him financially. If he is cruel with you, be kind and considerate with him. If he harms you accept his excuses. Behave with him as if he is a master and you are a slave, and he is a benefactor and you are a beneficiary. But be careful that you do not thus behave with undeserving and mean persons.
Do not develop friendship with the enemy of your friend otherwise your friend will turn into an enemy.
Advise your friend sincerely and to the best of your ability even though he may not like it.
Keep a complete control over your temper and anger because I never found anything more beneficial at the end and producing more good results than such a control.
Be mild, pleasant and lenient with him who is harsh, gross, and strict with you; gradually he will turn to your behaviour.

Grant favour and be considerate to your enemy because you will thus gain either one of the two kinds of victories: (one rising above your enemy, the other of reducing the intensity of his hostility).
If you want to cease relations with your friend, then do not break off totally, let your heart retain some consideration for him so that you will still have some regard for him if he comes back to you.
Do not disappoint a person who holds a good opinion of you and do not make him change his opinion.
Under the impression that you, as a friend, can behave as you like, do not violate the rights of your friend because, when he is deprived of his rights and privileges, he will no more remain your friend.
Do not ill-treat members of your family and do not behave with them as if you are the most cruel man alive.
Do not run after him who tries to avoid you.
The greatest achievement of your character is that the hostility of your brother against you does not overcome the consideration and friendship you feel towards him, and his ill-treatment of you does not overbalance your kind treatment to him.
Do not get worried and depressed over the oppressions because whoever oppresses you is in reality doing himself harm and is trying to find ways for your good.
Never ill-treat a person who has done good to you.
Know it well, son, that there are two kinds of livelihood: one which you are searching for and the other which follows you (which has been destined for you). It will reach you even if you do not try to obtain it.
To be submissive, humble, crawling and begging when one is needy, powerless and poor and to be arrogant, oppressing and cruel when in power and opulence are two very ugly traits of the human character.
Nothing in this world is really useful to you unless it has some utility and value for you for the next world. If you at all want to lament over things which you have lost in this world then worry about the loss of things which had immortal values for you.
The past and almost all that was in your possession during the past is not with you know. You may thus rationally come to the conclusion that the present and all that is in your possession now will also leave you.
Do not be like persons on whom advice has no effect; they require punishment to improve them. A sensible man acquires education and culture through advice, while brutes and beasts always improve through punishment.
Overcome your sorrows, your worries and your misfortunes with patience and faith in the Merciful Lord and your hard work; one who gives up a straight path, honest and rational ways of thinking and working, will harm himself.
A friend is like a relation and a true friend is one who speaks well of you even behind your back.
Inordinate desires are related with misfortunes.
Often close relations behave more distantly than strangers and often strangers help you more than your nearest relatives.
Poor is he who has no friends.
Whoever forsakes truth finds that his path of life has become narrow and troublesome.
Contentment and honesty are the lasting assets to retain ones prestige and position.
The strongest relation is the one which is between man and Allah.
One who does not care for you is your enemy.
If there is a danger of death or destruction in securing an object then safety lies in avoiding it.
Weaknesses and shortcomings are not the things to talk about.
Opportunities do not repeat themselves.
Sometimes very wise and learned persons fail to achieve the object they were aiming at and foolish and uneducated people attain their purposes.
Postpone evil deeds as long as possible because you can commit them whenever you so desire (then why hurry in committing them).
To cut connections with ignorant people is itself like forming connections with wise persons.
Whoever trusts this world is betrayed by it and whoever gives it importance is disgraced by it.
Every arrow of yours will not hit the bull's eye.
When status changes your conditions also change.
Before ascertaining the conditions of a route, find out what kinds of persons will accompany you on the journey.
Instead of enquiring about the condition of the home in which you are going to stay, first of all try to find out what kind of people your neighbours are.
Do not introduce ridiculous topics in your talk even if you have to repeat sayings of others.
Do not seek the advice of women, their verdicts are often immature and incorrect and their determinations are not firm. You must guard and defend them and act as a shelter to protect them from impious and injurious surroundings and infamous sights, this kind of shelter will keep them well-protected from every harm. Their contact with a vicious and sinful atmosphere (even with all the shelter that you can provide) is going to prove more harmful than being left with protection. Do not let them interfere with affairs where you cannot personally guide or protect them. Do not let them aspire for things which are beyond their capacities. They are more like decoration to humanity and are not made

to rule and govern humanity. Exhibit reasonable interest in things which they desire and give importance to them, but do not let them influence your opinions and do not let them impel you to go against your sane views.
Do not force them into marriages which they abhor or which they consider below their dignity because there is danger of thus converting honourable and virtuous women into shameless and dishonourable beings.
Divide and distribute work among your servants so that you can hold each one responsible for the work entrusted to them. This is a better and smoother way of carrying on a work than each one of them throwing the responsibility of every bit of work on somebody else.
Treat the members of your family with love and respect because they act as wings with which you fly and as hands which support you and fight for you. They are people towards whom you turn when you are in trouble and in need.
My dear son! After having given these pieces of advice to you I entrust you to the Lord. He will help, guide and protect you in this world and the Hereafter. I beseech Him to take you under His protection in both the worlds.

Letter 32

A letter to Mu’awiya.

You have misguided the whole generation of men around you. Having no faith in the truth of Islam you have led others astray. You have thrown them in the depths of ignorance. You have enticed them towards the abyss for unenlightenment and illiteracy. They were out to reach truth but they cannot reach it now, because of you. They have lost the true path of religion. They are becoming sceptics and most of them are returning to infidelity of pre-Islamic days.

Theirs is an unfortunate plight. A few wise men from amongst them who have seen your ways and who realized the intensity of your viciousness and your cunningness in turning them away from the ways of Islam, have given you up and have turned towards Allah. They are fortunate and may be blessed.

O Mu’awiya! Fear Allah, do not let the Devil lead you to Hell, throw away its yoke which is tied round your neck, remember that this life will after all come to an end and soon you will have to face the next world.

Letter 33

The following letter was written to Qutham bin Abbas, the brother of Abdullah bin Abbas, who was the Governor of Imam Ali (a) in the province of Hijaz.

I have received confidential reports from the Western State saying that certain people have been sent from Syria and they are pretending that they are at Makkah for Hajj pilgrimage but the duty assigned to them was to carry on propaganda and create disloyalty against me. These people have no eyes for truth and no ears for the Orders of Allah and sayings of the Holy Prophet (s). They are trying to reach the path of religion through wrong ways and to acquire worldly wealth and pleasure under the pretence of religious activities. Not only this but they are also trying in various ways to persuade noble and pious persons to sell their salvation to the possession of pleasures of this life. They are serving their vicious ruler by sinning against Allah and man.

Remember that Divine Reward is for those who earn it with their sincere and good deeds and punishment is the lot of men who deserve it by their evil activities. Therefore, you should carry on your duties like an experienced, wise and faithful officer, like an officer who obeys his ruler, guards his interest and keeps himself well-informed of the affairs of the State. Do not act in a way that you may in future feel sorry for your actions and may have to offer excuses and apologies. Do not get arrogant when times prove favourable to you and do not show weakness when your duties require you to be strong and resolute.

Letter 34

Muhammad, son of Abu Bakr (the First Caliph) was the favourite disciple and companion of Imam Ali (a). Imam Ali (a) had treated and trained him like his own child and had appointed him as the Governor of Egypt.

Later on Imam Ali (a) called him back from Egypt and sent Maalik Ashtar as the Governor. Muhammad thought that he was deposed and felt sad about it. When Imam Ali (a) came to know of this he wrote the following letter to him.

I am given to understand that you feel sorry and aggrieved because I called you back and sent Maalik in your place as the Governor of Egypt. The fact of the case is that I did not bring about this change because I found you weak and inefficient and wanted to make you more energetic and strong but because as a change I wanted to send you to a place where the work was easier and which you would find more congenial.

Undoubtedly the man whom I sent as the Governor of Egypt was very faithful to us and very severe against our enemies. May Allah bless him as he finished the days of life assigned to him and left this world. He died in such a state that we were pleased with him. May Allah grant him His highest reward.

You come out of your house, armed with superior intelligence and the best armours, ready to face the enemies. Be ready to fight those who fight against you. Advise the people to obey the orders of the Lord and ask His help as much and as often as you can so that He may grant success to you in your important affairs and may help you in your difficulties.

Letter 35

When Muhammad bin Abi Bakr was killed in Egypt by the guerrillas of Mu’awiya through disloyalty of his (Muhammad's) own companions and officers, Imam Ali (a) felt sad and wrote the following letter to Ibn Abbas.

Ibn Abbas! Muhammad, (may his soul rest in peace), died as a martyr and Egypt has fallen in the hands of the enemies. I beseech the Reward of Allah for the sorrow I feel and the grief I suffer on account of the martyrdom of this young man who was like a son to me. He loved me. He was faithful to me. So far as the defense of the Islamic State is concerned he was like a sharp sword and an impregnable fort.

Long before this deplorable event I had issued orders to the Heads of various provinces and to the people of Kufa to reach him or send help to him when he calls for it. I had repeated these orders. Some went to his help but half-heartedly, others started submitting excuses, while some sent false reports of important engagements and did not co-operate with him.

I feel disgusted and pray to Allah to relieve me of the society of such faithless and worthless people.

I swear by Allah that had I no desire of dying as a martyr, and had I not been ready for my death awaiting night and day, I would not have liked to live amongst them even for a day and I would not have come out with them to fight against the enemies of Allah and Islam.

Letter 36

The following is a letter written by Imam Ali (a) to his brother Aqil.

It so happened that Zahaak bin Qays Fahri was sent to Makkah by Mu'awiya with a force of guerrillas to ravage the city. Imam Ali (a) had sent Hujr bin Adi Kindi to defend the city of Makkah. Hujr defeated Zahaak. Aqil at that time was in Makkah. He wrote to Imam Ali (a) offering his voluntary services saying that the Quraysh were not sincerely serving the cause of Islam and were bent upon the enmity of Imam Ali (a). In reply Imam Ali (a) wrote:

I had sent against him (Zahaak) a strong force of Muslim fighters. When he realised this, he wanted to run away, giving up loot and plunder. Before sunset our expeditionary force overtook him and his guerrillas, a skirmish did take place, not worth being mentioned as a battle, and he fled. When he was caught by the throat he thought a cowardly retreat to be the best solution.

Do not take to heart the behaviour of Quraysh. To talk about their scepticism, their enmity of Islam, their revolt against the cause of Allah and their desire to bring harm to me are a waste of time. They now are as much bent upon doing me injustice and fighting against me, as they were unanimously against the Holy Prophet (s). May Allah punish them for their sins. They have not even paid any consideration to the relationship that existed between them and I. They have deprived me of the estate of my mother's son.

As far as your enquiry about my intention against the enemies of Islam is concerned, my opinion is to combat those who have made up their minds to harm the cause of Islam. I shall keep on combating them to the end of my life.

I am neither emboldened by abundance of followers nor am I disheartened by their scarcity. Do not think that your brother will lose heart if people forsake him and give up their help or he will humiliate himself, bow down against heavy odds, submit to unreasonable demands of others or accept their commands or orders like a beast of burden.

So far as I am concerned I am like a person about whom a poet of Bani Salim says:-

"If you enquire about me, my beloved, Then hear me:
I am very strong to face calamities and reverses;
I cannot tolerate
That signs of sorrows and griefs on my face
Make my enemies happy,
And increase sorrows of my friends".

Letter 37

A letter to Mu'awiya.

Allahu Akbar! How hopelessly you are engulfed in your inordinate and sinful desires, how mercilessly you are swept by such vicious and unholy cravings which misguide you in this life and will bring you to a sad end. You have forsaken the cause of truth and justice and have arrogantly spurned the arguments which are agreeable to Allah and were unacceptable to man.
What do you mean by creating this faction and revolt with pretence of taking revenge on the murderers of Uthman? The real facts of the case are that during the life of Caliph Uthman, you only went to his help when this action in the end was profitable to you and you could get something out of him, and you refused to help him when he was really in need of you and your support and for which he had frequently requested you.

Letter 38

A letter to the people of Egypt, telling them about Maalik when Imam Ali (a) appointed him as their Governor.

From the creature of Allah, Ali bin Abi Taalib (a), to people whose anger and enmity was on account of Allah, they got angry when they saw that their land was being run over by people disobedient to Allah, when rights were being crushed and obligations were being ignored and spurned, when tyranny and oppression were the order of the day and every good or bad person and every local resident or outsider had to face them, when goodness and piety were taboos and when nobody cared to keep himself away from vices and sins.

After glorifying Allah and paying homage to the Holy Prophet (s) be it known to you that I am sending towards you a creature of Allah who forsakes rest and sleep during days of danger, who does not fear his enemy in the critical junctures, and who is more severe than burning fire to sinners and vicious people. He is Maalik bin Haarith Mazhiji (Mazhij is a sub-class of Bani Nakha'a). Hear him and obey his commands which you will find to be right and according to true canons of Islam. He is such a sword among the swords of Allah that its sharpness will never get blunt or whose stroke and blow will never be without effect and who will never lose an opportunity. If he orders you to advance against your enemies, then advance; if he commands you to halt then halt because he himself will never advance nor halt and will never give orders to advance, halt or retreat without my consent.

In sending him to you, I have given preference to your needs over those of mine so that he may serve you faithfully and may treat your enemies severely and strongly.

Letter 39

A letter to Amr bin Aas.

Undoubtedly you have subordinated your religion to the worldly power, pomp and wealth provided to you by a person whose apostation and scepticism are not hidden from anybody. He and his ways are known to everybody. He sullies the reputation as well as the character of those who keep company with him. He tries to deceive sober and sedate people. For the sake of remnants and crumbs of bread left over at his table, you have attached yourself to him. You are following him like a dog which follows a tiger, frightfully looks at its paws and waits to live upon the refuse which it leaves of its kill.

In this way you have lost your self-respect and honour in this world and your salvation in the next. You have ruined your present and future. Had you followed the true path, you would have secured success in this world as well as in the Hereafter.

Letter 40

A letter to a commissioner of a province. It could not be ascertained as to whom it was addressed.

I have been given to understand that you have taken possession of State-lands and that you have not only brought them under personal use but you have misappropriated State treasury also. Will you immediately send the detailed accounts (about both the items)? Remember that the reckoning of Allah is far more severe than any audit which man can carry out.

Letter 41

The following is a letter written to a Governor who left Imam Ali (a) and ran away with Public Treasury, this man was a cousin of Imam Ali (a) and was his confidant.

Some historians say that he was Abdullah bin Abbas who was Imam's cousin and had once behaved in this way.

After glorifying Allah and praising the Holy Prophet (s) let it be known to you that I trusted you and appointed you on a very responsible post. I did this under the impression that from my own clan nobody will prove more sympathetic, more helpful and more trustworthy to me than you. But when you found that the times have gone against your cousin, his enemies are on the war path, wealth of the country is being recklessly plundered, the nation has lost sight of the true path of religion and it is confused and confounded, then you have also changed colour. You have forsaken your cousin, you left him along with other deserters and by joining the gang of dishonest persons, you have also betrayed the trust I reposed in you.

You have changed so much that you have not only lost the sense of sympathy for your cousin but you have also lost the sense of honesty and virtue. Your present behaviour indicates that you have never been sincere, as if your participating in jihad (the Holy Wars) was not in the cause of Allah and as if the true light of religion had never illuminated the dark recesses of your mind. Along with the majority, you had also participated in jihad to amass wealth under the pretence of serving Allah and religion and awaited opportunities to decamp with wealth of the Islamic State. And when the opportunity presented itself to you to be dishonest to your heart's content and when you found your ruler seriously engaged somewhere else you jumped at the evil chance, you invaded the Public Treasury and looted as much as was possible for you, the money which was reserved for widows, orphans and the poor. In this plunder your action was so quick, so nimble and so effective that it resembled the action of a very active and wary wolf attacking and snatching away a wounded and helpless goat.

You have with pleasure sent this looted wealth to Hijaz.

The sin pleased you and the loot made you happy. The thought that it was an evil deed never stopped you from the act. Did you take it for a heritage which you can take hold of and send home? Allahu Akbar! Do you not believe in the Day of Judgement? Are you not afraid of the reckoning on that Day?

O you whom we took for a wise and intelligent person! How can you happily and with easy conscience eat and drink things purchased by this wealth being aware all the time of its unlawfulness. Do you realise the enormity of your sin? Out of the money which was earmarked for the use of orphans, paupers and the destitute or which was reserved for faithful Muslims and Mujahids or was conserved for the defence of the Muslims State, you provided for yourself means of your enjoyments and pleasures, you purchased slave-girls out of it and you spent it on your marriages.

I advise you to fear Allah and return the money to those whom it rightfully belongs. If you do not do this and if Allah gives me a chance to punish you then I shall act in such a way that Allah will be pleased with me. I shall give you a stroke with that sword of mine which has sent all those whom I struck with it, to Hell. I swear by the Merciful Allah that even if all the wealth which you have so wickedly looted had come into my possession in a lawful way it would not have pleased me to leave it to my heir as a heirloom.

Control your inordinate desires, think well over what you have done and remember that you have reached the mature age, just try to visualize that death has brought an end to your life, you are lying in a grave with so much earth over you and your deeds are placed before you. What would you say and do at such a time and place, a place where tyrants and oppressors could only repent and wish to go back to the world they left behind but there will be no escape from the punishment.

Letter 42

The following is a letter which Imam Ali (a) wrote to Umar bin Abi Salama Mukhzumi when Imam Ali (a) called him back from the Governorship of Bahrain and appointed Nu'man bin Ajlan Zuraqi in his place.

After glorifying Allah and praising the Holy Prophet (s) let it be known to you that I have appointed Nu'man as the Governor of the province of Bahrain and have removed you from the post not because I was dissatisfied with your work or there was any charge against you. Undoubtedly you have discharged your duties satisfactorily and have done full justice to the trust reposed in you. I am quite satisfied with your work and I neither doubt your honesty nor do I consider you to be inefficient and blameworthy.
Come to me immediately. The fact is that I have resolved to face the Syrian tyrants and oppressors and I want you to be with me because you are one of those men whom I can trust to help me in facing the enemies of Allah and in the establishment of the Islamic State.

Letter 43

A letter to Masqala bin Hubayra al-Shaybani who was governor of Ardshir Khurra (Iran).

I have received certain information about you and if you have actually done what is reported against you then you have verily, displeased Allah and have annoyed me.
I am given to understand that you are lavishly distributing State treasury among the bedouins of your clan and among those Arab nomads who are loyal to you. You know this wealth has been gathered by Jihad in which many of them were killed and many more of them were wounded.
I swear by Allah who gave life to plants and animals that if this accusation against you proves correct then you will humiliate yourself in my eyes and will lose the good opinion I have formed about you.
Do not imagine that the trust reposed in you by Allah can be treated lightly, do not ruin your religion otherwise you will be one of those whose deeds are to be punished.
Remember that all the Muslims who are there or here have equal share in this wealth. Believing and acting on this principle, they come to me for their share and receiving it from me they return to their places.

Letter 44

Ziyad was the son of a slave named Ubayd, his mother was Sumaiyya, a slave-girl of Haarith bin Kalda, a woman of flexible virtues and very elastic conscience.

But Ziyad grew up to be an intelligent man and a very good orator. Everybody knew that Ziyad was born out of wedlock. Umar during his caliphate, did not give him any chance but later on he became a governor and Imam Ali (a) had allowed him to retain that post. When Mu'awiya came to power, he started corresponding secretly with Ziyad, inviting him to leave the side of Imam Ali (a) and to join him, offering him the bribe of being declared the son of Abu Sufyan. When Imam Ali (a) came to know of these secret messages he wrote the following letter to Ziyad.

I am given to understand that Mu'awiya has been corresponding with you. Beware, he wants to make a fool of you, to blunt your intelligence and to harm your self-respect. Remember that it is Satan which will attack an imprudent and incautious Muslim from behind and from right and left so that finding him unwary and unwatchful, it may overpower him and may enslave his reasoning.

The fact is that during the Caliphate of Caliph Umar, Abu Sufyan unwisely gave utterances to something which was unjustifiable and unreasonable. It was one of those evil suggestions of Satan which are not only an insult to a self-respecting man but which cannot help in proving the descent (according to the laws of Islam) or in legalizing the heritage. The condition of a man claiming such a lineage is that of a gate crasher in a party from which he may be thrown out with humiliation.

Letter 45

Uthman bin Hunayf was the Governor of Basra.

He was one of those persons who were held in respect by Imam Ali (a). During his governorship Ibn Hunayf once attended a feast given by a rich man of Basra. It was a very sumptuous dinner. When Imam Ali (a) heard of this he wrote the following letter to him. It shows that the more Imam Ali (a) liked a person the more severely he judged his activities.

Ibn Hunayf! I have received information that a person of Basra invited you to a dinner and you immediately accepted the invitation. I have also heard that very sumptuous meals were served there! Finest varieties of viands were placed before you in large plates and you enjoyed them. I am sorry to hear the news. I never expected that you would accept the invitation of a person who invites big officers and rich people and from whose doors poor persons and hungry paupers are turned away rudely.

Look carefully into the things which you eat. If there is even a shade of their being obtained unlawfully then throw them away, only eat those things about which you are perfectly certain that they are obtained by honest means.

You must know Ibn Hunayf, that for everyone who follows a religion there is a leader and a guide from whom the follower learns the canons of that religion and the ways of leading a pious life. Now look to your Imam (Imam Ali (a) meant himself). In this world he has satisfied himself with two old, torn and coarse garments and two pieces of bread (one in the morning and one in the evening). I know that to adopt such a hard way of life is beyond you but at least try to be pious. Try to follow me and be my companion in virtue, piety and simple living. I swear by Allah that from this world I have neither amassed gold nor have I gathered wealth and possessions nor have I changed these coarse and old garments of mine with even an ordinary raiment from your treasury.

Verily, under the sky we had only Fadak as our personal property but we were deprived of it, it tempted them, they took it by force and we had to bear the wrench patiently and cheerfully, the best judge is the Lord Almighty. What was I going to do with Fadak or with any other worldly possession? I never wanted them for myself. I know that tomorrow my lodging will be my grave. Its darkness will cover my traces and will not allow my condition to reach this world. A grave after all is a pit, and even if it is made very big and broad, time will gradually reduce its size and will fill it with earth and stones. My attention is concentrated on one thing, that is, with the help of the fear of Allah and piety I keep my desires under control so that in this world I may not commit sins and errors and on the Day of Judgement when fear will be the lot of everybody I may feel safe and satisfied.

If I had so wanted I could have very easily found ways and means to provide for myself the purest honey, the best variety of wheat and the finest silk clothes that could be woven. But it is not possible for inordinate cravings to overcome me and it is not possible that greediness persuades me to acquire the best provisions when in Hijaz and Yemen there may be people who have no hope of obtaining a piece of bread and who have never satisfied their hunger fully. It is not possible for me to satiate myself when there are around me people whom hunger and thirst keeps restless and agonized. Do you want me to be like that person about whom somebody has very aptly said, “Is this disease not enough for you that you keep on sleeping with your stomach full, and around you there are such starving mouths that will greedily eat even dried goat-skin”?

Shall I be satisfied simply because people call me “Amir al-Mu'minin” (Leader of the faithful Muslims)? Shall I not sympathise with the faithful Muslims in their calamities? Shall I not be their partner in their adversities? Shall I not be their fellow-sufferer? Shall I not set an example for them to patiently, courageously and virtuously bear privation?

Am I created simply to keep on thinking about my food? Am I like that animal which is tied down to a post and which thinks of nothing but its fodder or like that uncontrolled beast which roams about and does nothing but eats its fill and does not know the purpose of life for which it is created? Have I no religion, no conscience and no fear of Allah? Am I left absolutely free without any check or control to do as I like? Am I at liberty to go astray, to wander away from the true path of religion and to roam about in the wilderness of greed and avarice?

I am sure some of you would say that if the son of Abu Taalib eats so little and lives on starvation, then surely he must have gone weak and exhausted and must be unfit to face his enemies in battlefields. But you must remember that hardy trees which grow on the border of deserts have very strong timber; and trees which are found in marshy lands have thin bark and soft wood, similarly when the former are lit up they burn longer and with a very strong glow and give out more heat than the latter.

My relationship with the Holy Prophet (s) is like a branch shooting from the same stem or like the relation of the wrist to the arm. I swear by Allah that even if all the Arabs unite together against me I shall not run away from the battlefield and when the occasion arrives I shall do my best to subdue them, at the same time I shall try to clean the earth of the existence and vicious influence of that untimely evil genius and warped mind (Mu’awiya) so that the land may be free of his wicked and sinful sway.

O vicious world! Do not try to snare me, you cannot entrap me, I am beyond your temptations and pitfalls and I have taken good care not to slip into such pitfalls. Where are those people whom you had tempted with pleasures and enjoyments? Where are those groups whom you had allured with pomp and glory? They are imprisoned in their graves

pressed down by tons of earth upon them. O vicious world! Had you been a person or a being with life and limbs I would have punished you under the laws of the Lord because you have tempted with impossible hopes millions of individuals from the true path of humanity, you have brought about destruction, decline and falls of nations after nations alluring them with power and pleasure, you have thrown crowned heads into dust, you have lowered them to such depths that there is no refuge for any of them at that place and no one can come out from there.
Woe be to the man who with misplaced confidence, steps on the slippery ground presented by you as a firm foothold, he will certainly slip; woe be to the man who thinks of riding the waves of false hopes and expectations raised by you, he will surely sink.
Whoever tries not to be entrapped by your temptations and snared by your allurements will find the straight path to safety and salvation. Whoever tries to spurn you does not care for the consequences of his action though he may find himself in adverse circumstances and difficulties. To him this world, its pleasures and the life surrounded by the pleasures or by woes and afflictions, is like a day which will soon pass away.
Be gone from me. I can neither be caught unawares by you that you may plunge me into disgrace and humiliations nor will I lose control of myself that you may drag me wherever you like.
I swear by Allah that barring His Destiny over which I have no control and which may mould my life as He wishes, I shall control myself that I shall be contented and happy if I get one piece of bread with a pinch of salt and that my mind will be dead to the desires of pleasures, fame, power and glory.
Ibn Hunayf! You have seen sheep and goats, after eating and drinking their fill they retire to their den. Do you want Ali to be like them - to eat, drink and enjoy? May I get blind if after having passed so many years of my life I now turn into an animal in human form!
Happy is the person who did his duty with Allah and man, who bore adversities patiently and when sleep overpowered him he used his hand as a pillow and lay on mere earth along with those whom fear of the Day of Judgement has often kept awake, who do not find much time to sleep, whose lips keep on moving glorifying Allah, and whose sins have been absolved on account of the penance they impose upon themselves. They are noble persons and they certainly will secure salvation.
O Ibn Hunayf! fear Allah and be content with the bread that you get with lawful means, so that you may be exempted and free from the fire of Hell.

Letter 46

A letter from Imam Ali (a) to one of his governors.

You are one of those persons whose assistance I require in propagating the religion, in strengthening its hold, in defeating the unbelievers and sinners and in guarding dangerous frontiers of this State. Seek the help of Allah in your difficulties and enterprises. In your behaviour with your subjects remember that you should use leniency and tolerance alongside severity. Be kind, tolerant and lenient as far as and as long as possible but when you feel that your purpose cannot be achieved without severity only then can you adopt such an attitude.
But remember always to treat them sympathetically, kindly, courteously and to treat them cheerfully. While meeting them, talking to them and wishing everyone of them, whether rich or poor, big or small you should behave as if they are your equals so that important persons of your State may not presume to derive undue advantage out of your uncalled for servile behaviour and poor people may not lose hope in your justice and sympathy.

Letter 47

When Abd al-Rahman bin Muljam wounded Imam Ali (a) who was then offering the morning prayers in the Mosque of Kufa, Imam Ali (a) advised Imam Hasan (a) and Imam Husayn (a) in the following words.

I advise you to fear Allah, do not go after this vicious world though it may try to entice you, do not seek it though it may seek you and do not grieve over and pine for things which this world refuses you. Let the eternal Reward and Blessings of Allah be the prompting factors for all that you say and do. Be an enemy of tyrants and oppressors and be a friend and helper of those who are oppressed and tyrannized.

To you, to my other children, to my relatives and to all who acquire this will of mine, I advise to fear Allah and to be pious, to have fair and honest dealings with one another and improve mutual relations because I have heard your grandfather, the Holy Prophet (s) saying, “To remove mutual enmity, ill-feeling and hatred is better than recommended prayers and fasting”.

Fear Allah when the question of helpless orphans arises. You should never let them starve. So long as you are there to guard and protect them they should not be ruined or lost. The Holy Prophet (s) had always advised, cautioned and reminded us of this responsibility, so much so that we often thought that the Prophet of Allah (s) might on the next occasion assign them a share from our heritage.

Fear Allah in respect of the Holy Qur’an, lest others should excel and surpass you in following its tenets and in acting according to its orders. Fear Allah so far as prayers are concerned because prayers are pillars of your faith. Fear Allah in the matter of His Holy House (Kaa’ba). Let it not be deserted because if it is deserted, you (the Muslims) will be lost.

Do not forget Allah, struggle in His cause with your tongue, with your wealth and with your lives.

Develop mutual liking, friendship and love and help one another. Take care that you do not spurn and treat one another badly and unsympathetically.

Exhort people to do good and abstain them from evil, otherwise the vicious and the wicked will be your overlord and if you willingly allow such persons to be your rulers then your prayers will not be heard by Allah.

O' sons of Abdul Muttalib! Let there be no retaliation for the act of my murder, do not roam about with a drawn sword and with the slogan: “Amir al-Mu'minin is killed”, and do not start the massacre of my opponents and enemies.

See to it that only one man, that is my assassin, is killed, as the punishment of the crime of murder is death and nobody else is molested. The punishment to the man who attempted the murder shall take place only when I die of the wound delivered by him and this punishment shall be only one stroke of sword to end his life. He should not be tortured before his death, his hands and feet should not be amputated because I have heard the Holy Prophet (s) saying: “Do not amputate hands and feet of anybody, be it a biting dog”.

Letter 48

A letter to Mu'awiya.

Remember that inequity and falsehood bring disgrace to a man in this world and in the Hereafter. The vicious character of a tyrant always betrays itself to those who carefully look into his actions. You must know that you can never get what has not been destined for you.

There are people who want to grab a thing without having any right or claim over it. To get the object which they crave for, they try to interpret the commands of Allah to suit their purpose. But Allah has always given a lie to such people. Therefore, you should also fear the Day of Judgement, the day when only those people who have done deeds deserving reward will be happy, and those, who have surrendered themselves to Satan and do not want to come out of its influence, will cut a sorry figure.

You invited me to let the Holy Book act as an arbitrator but you never believed that Book to be the Word of Allah. I, therefore, did not accept your invitation though I always accept the commands of that Book.

Letter 49

A letter to Mu’awiya.

This vicious world will try to turn a man away from religion and from having faith in the Hereafter. And when a worldly-minded person grasp a little of it, it always opens before him vistas of false hopes, ambitions, temptations and greed, so that he is never satisfied with what he has grabbed and will always covet for more. The result often is that he loses what he has already amassed and his plans do not work out. If you take a lesson from the past then you can guard your future very well.

Letter 50

A circular to the chiefs of his army.

This is circular-letter from the creature of Allah, Ali bin Abi Taalib (a) to the chiefs of army and generals of his cantonments.

It is incumbent upon the chiefs of the State that their status and prestige should not make them change their attitude towards the subjects of the State; instead, the favours which the Lord has granted them should draw them nearer to the people and should make them more sympathetic towards them.

My duty towards you is that, except the secrets of war, I do not keep anything pertaining to the affairs of the State hidden from you. Barring religious questions in all other matters concerning your welfare, I should take you in my confidence and seek your advice, I should guard your interests and rights to the best of my ability, I should see that you are well-protected and well-looked after and I should treat all of you equally without any favouritism. If you receive such favourable treatment from me then it is your duty to thank Allah for His Kindness. Your obedience to me is that you follow the orders given, be good and bravely face difficulties to attain the right path. If you cannot maintain this standard of fidelity and do not behave yourself then you will lose the straight path of virtue and nobody will be lower in my eyes than you. I shall then punish you severely.

You should make your subordinate officers promise to act accordingly and should give them the same facilities and privileges as are given to you so that your affairs also run smoothly.

Letter 51

A letter to the collectors of taxes and revenues.

A letter from the creature of Allah, Ali bin Abi Taalib (a) to the collectors of taxes and revenues. One who does not care for his salvation, will never think of providing for his life after death with good deeds and, therefore, he will not be able to escape the punishment. Be it known to you that the responsibilities laid down upon you are a few but the Divine reward reserved for you is very high. Allah has forbidden you from tyranny and injustice; and even if there had not been any fear of punishment for these inequities, the mere reward of being just, kind and human would have been such that there could not have been any excuse for not trying to achieve it.

Treat the tax-payers with equity and justice and think over their wishes with patience and kindness because you are the treasurer of the subjects, representative of the people and the officer on behalf of higher authority. Do not force anybody to forsake his requirements and to do without his necessities (so that he may pay the taxes). In collection of taxes and revenues do not sell their winter and summer clothing, their slaves or such of their animals as are of service to them, do not resort to whipping, do not touch their property, be they Muslims or non-Muslims, but if you find there armaments or weapons or horses of the non-Muslims for which there is a danger and a possibility of these being used in war against the State, you may confiscate them. Such things as are dangerous to the safety of the country should not be left in the possession of unreliable persons so that they should not prove harmful and injurious to the Muslim State and its people.

Be kind to the people, treat the army well, do not grudge to do your best in helping the subjects and in guarding the religion. These two duties are obligations laid down upon you by Allah because, in return to the Blessings and Bounties which He has granted us, He wants you and me to be thankful to Him as much as we can, and to help His cause to the best of our ability. You must remember that even our strength and capabilities are His Blessings granted to us.

Letter 52

A circular about prayers to the governors of all the provinces.

Lead the Zuhr prayer till the shadow of a wall becomes equal to the height of the wall, the Asr prayers can be performed till the sun is still bright and enough time of the day is left for a person to cover a distance of six miles. The Maghrib prayers should be performed when people break their fasts and when Hajj pilgrims return from Arafat. And the time for Ice prayers is when the red glow of the even twilight disappears from the West, till one-third of the night is still left. The morning prayers are to be performed when there appears enough light of the dawn for a man to recognize the face of his companion.

While leading the prayers make them so short that the weakest among you may not feel tired to follow you and his strength and patience may not be over strained.

Letter 53

An order to Maalik al-Ashtar.

[Maalik al-Ashtar was a famous companion of Imam Ali (a). He was the head of the Bani Nakha'i clan. He was a faithful disciple of Imam Ali (a). He was a brave warrior and had acted as a Commander-in-Chief of the armies of Imam Ali (a). His valour had earned him the title of "Fearless Tiger". Imam Ali (a) had specially taught him the principles of administration and jurisprudence. He venerated and loved Imam Ali (a) sincerely and earned Mu'awiya's enmity on that account. Mu'awiya had conspired against him and got him killed by his gang of hirelings. His untimely death deeply grieved Imam Ali (a) who, expressing his grief said: "He was to me what I was to the Holy Prophet (s)". The following instructions in the form of a letter were written to him by Imam Ali (a) who appointed him as the Governor of Egypt in place of Muhammad bin Abi Bakr:

This letter is a précis of the principles of administration and justice as dictated by Islam. It deals with the duties and obligations of rulers, their chief responsibilities, the question of priorities of rights and obligations, dispensation of justice, control over secretaries and subordinate staff; distribution of work and duties amongst the various branches of administration, their co-ordination with each other and their co-operation with the centre. In it Imam Ali (a) advises Maalik to combat corruption and oppression amongst the officers, to control markets and imports and exports, to curb evils of profiteering, hoarding, black-marketing. In it he has also explained stages of various classes in a society, the duties of the government towards the lowest class, how they are to be looked after and how their conditions are to be improved, the principle of equitable distribution of wealth and opportunities, orphans and their up-bringing, maintenance of the handicapped, crippled and disabled persons and substitutes in lieu of homes for the aged and the disabled.

Then he (a) discusses the army, of whom it should consist of and how the ignorant, ruthless and corrupt mercenaries should not be allowed to join the army as their profession. He lays great stress upon the honour and the nobility of volunteers who in time of need, offer their voluntary services to defend the Islamic State. Finally, he comments upon the rights of rulers over the ruled and of the ruled over the rulers.

There is a main central idea running all through these instructions, like one single thread out of which the cloth is woven, it is that of Allah . The regime is of Allah, the governors and the governed are both creatures of Allah, and their respective duties are laid down by Allah.

He expects each one of them to fulfil his obligations and to do his duties. The orphans and the depressed are the trust of Allah, the army is the army of Allah, whose soldiers should not behave like haughty and arrogant mercenaries but like honourable and noble knights, everyone is expected to do his duty to the best of his ability. He will be rewarded in Paradise according.

In short this letter is on one hand the Gospel of the principles of administration as taught by the Holy Qur'an, a code to establish a kind and benevolent rule, throwing light on various aspects of justice, benevolence and mercy, an order based on the ethics of Divine rulership where justice and mercy are shown to human beings irrespective of class, creed and colour, where poverty is neither a stigma nor a disqualification and where justice is not tainted with nepotism, favouritism, provincialism or religious fanaticism; and, on the other hand, it is a thesis on the higher values of morality. The famous Arab Christian, jurist, poet and philosopher Abdul Masih Antaaki who died sometime in the beginning of the 20th Century while discussing this letter writes that it is a far superior and better code than the one handed down by Moses and Hamurabi, it explains what a human administration should be like, how it is to be carried out and it justifies the claims of Muslims that Islam wants to introduce a Divine administration of the people for the people and by the people and it wants a ruler to rule not to please himself but to bring happiness to the ruled and no religion before Islam tried to achieve this end, Ali (a) should be congratulated for having introduced these principles during his rule and for have written them down for the posterity.]

IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, THE BENEFICENT, THE MERCIFUL.

These are the orders issued by the creature of Allah, Ali, the son Abu Taalib (a) to Maalik, the son of Ashtar when he appointed Maalik as the Governor of Egypt to collect Zakat there, to combat the enemies of Islam and Egypt, to work for the welfare of its people and to look after its prosperity.

I order you, Maalik, always to keep the fear of Allah in your mind, to give priority to His worship and to give preference to obeying His Commands over every other thing in life, to carefully and faithfully follow the commandments and interdictions as are given by the Holy Book and the traditions of the Holy Prophet (s) because the success of a man to attain happiness in this world and in the next depends upon these qualities, and a failure to achieve these attributes brings about total failure in both the worlds.

I order you to use your head, heart, hands and tongue to help the creatures of Allah because the Almighty Allah holds Himself responsible to help those who sincerely try their best to help Him. Allah has further ordered you to keep your desires under control, to keep yourself under restraint when extravagant and inordinate yearnings and cravings try to

drive you towards vice and wickedness because usually your 'self' tries to incite and drag you towards infamy and damnation unless the Merciful Lord comes to your help.
Let it be known to you, Maalik, that I am sending you as a governor to a country which has seen many regimes before this. Some of them were benign, sympathetic and good, while others were tyrannical, oppressive and cruel. People will judge your regime as critically as you have studied the activities of other regimes and they will criticize you in the same way as you have censured or approved other rulers.
You must know that a good and virtuous man is known and recognized by the good that is said about him and the praise which Allah has destined him to receive from others. Therefore, make your mind the source and fountain-head of good thoughts, good intentions and good deeds. This can only be attained by keeping a strict control on your desires and yearnings, however much they may try to incite and coerce you. Remember that the best way to do justice to your inner self and to keep it out of harm is to restrain it from vice and from things which the 'self' inordinately and irrationally desires.
Maalik! You must create in your mind kindness, compassion and love for your subjects. Do not behave towards them as if you are a voracious and ravenous beast and as if your success lies in devouring them.
Remember, Maalik, that amongst your subjects there are two kinds of people: those who have the same religion as you have; they are brothers to you, and those who have religions other than that of yours, they are human beings like you. Men of either category suffer from the same weaknesses and disabilities that human beings are inclined to, they commit sins, indulge in vices either intentionally or foolishly and unintentionally without realizing the enormity of their deeds. Let your mercy and compassion come to their rescue and help in the same way and to the same extent that you expect Allah to show mercy and forgiveness to you.
Maalik! You must never forget that if you are a ruler over them than the caliph is the ruler over you and Allah is the Supreme Lord over the caliph. And the reality is that He has appointed you as the governor and tested you through the responsibility of this rulership over them.
Never think of raising yourself to such a false prestige that you can declare war against Allah because you cannot ward off His Wrath and you can never be free from the need of His Mercy and Compassion.
Do not feel ashamed to forgive and forget. Do not hurry over punishments and do not be pleased and do not be proud of your power to punish. Do not get angry and lose your temper quickly over the mistakes and failures of those over whom you rule. On the contrary, be patient and sympathetic with them. Anger and desire of vengeance are not going to be of much help to you in your administration.
Never say to yourself, “I am their Lord, their ruler and all in all over them and that I must be obeyed submissively and humbly” because such a thought will unbalance your mind, will make you vain and arrogant, will weaken your faith in religion and will make you seek support of any power other than that of Allah . If you ever feel any pride or vanity on account of your sway and rule over your subjects then think of the supreme sway and rule of the Lord over the Universe, the extent of His creations, the supremacy of His Might and Glory, His Power to do things which you cannot even dream of doing and His control over you which is more dominating than that which you can ever achieve over anything around you. Such thoughts will cure your mental weakness, will keep you away from vanity and rebellion (against Allah), will reduce your arrogance and haughtiness and will take you back to the sanity which you had foolishly deserted.
Take care never to think of bringing yourself at par with Allah, never to think of matching your power with Him and contesting His Glory and ever to pretend that you possess might and power like Him because the Mighty Lord will always humble pitiless tyrants and will degrade all pretenders of His Power and Might.
So far as your own affairs or those of your relatives and friends are concerned take care that you do not violate the duties laid down upon you by Allah and do not usurp the rights of mankind, be impartial and do justice to them because if you give up equity and justice then you will certainly be a tyrant and an oppressor. And whoever tyrannizes and oppresses the creatures of Allah, will earn enmity of Allah along with the hatred of those whom he has oppressed; and whoever earns the Wrath of Allah loses all chances of salvation and he has no excuse to offer on the Day of Judgement. Every tyrant and oppressor is an enemy of Allah unless he repents and gives up oppression. Remember, Maalik! that there is nothing in this world more effective to turn His Blessings into His Wrath quicker than to insist upon oppression over His creatures because the Merciful Allah will always hear the prayers of those who have been oppressed and He will give no chance to oppressors.
You must always appreciate and adopt a policy which is neither too severe nor too lenient, a policy which is based upon equity will be largely appreciated. Remember that the displeasure of common men, the have-nots and the depressed persons more overbalances than the approval of important persons, while the displeasure of a few big people will be excused by the Lord if the general public and the masses of your subjects are happy with you.
Remember, Maalik! that usually these big personages are mentally the scum of the human society, they are the people who will be the worst drag upon you during your moments of peace and happiness, and the least useful to you during your hours of need and adversity, they hate justice the most, they will keep on demanding more and more out of the State resources and will seldom be satisfied with what they receive and will never be obliged for the favour shown to

them if their demands are justifiable refused, they will never accept any reasonable excuse or any rational argument and when the time changes, you will never find them staunch, faithful and loyal.
While the common men, the poor and apparently the less important section of your subjects are the pillars of Islam, they are the real assemblage of Muslims and the power and defensive force against the enemies of Islam. Keep your mind on their affairs, be more friendly with them and secure their trust and goodwill.
But be careful in forming your contacts (whether with the most important persons or the commoners); keep such people away from you and think them to be the enemy of the State who are scandal-mongers and who try to find fault with others and carry on propaganda against them because everywhere people have weaknesses and failings and it is the duty of the government to overlook (minor) shortcomings. You must not try to go in search of those weaknesses which are hidden from you, leave them to Allah, and about those weaknesses which come to your notice, you must try to teach them how to overcome them. Try not to expose the weaknesses of the people and Allah will conceal your own weaknesses which you do not want anybody to know.
Do not give cause to the people to envy each other (man against man, tribe against tribe or one section of the society against the other). Try to alleviate and root out mutual distrust and enmity from amongst your subjects.
Be fair, impartial and just in your dealings with all, individually and collectively and be careful not to make your person, position and favours act as sources of malice. Do not let any such thing or such person come near to you who does not deserve your nearness and your favour. Never lower your dignity and prestige.
Remember that backbiters and scandal-mongers belong to a mean and cunning group, though they pretend to be sincere advisers. Do not make haste to believe the news they bring and do not heed to their advice.
Do not accept the advice of misers, they will try their best to keep you away from acts of kindness and from doing good to others. They will make you frightened of poverty.
Similarly do not allow cowards to act as your advisers because they will make you timid in enforcing your orders, will scare you from handling important affairs boldly and will make your enterprises and invasions timid and timorous attempts. At the same time avoid greedy and covetous persons who would aspire to the position of acting as your counsellor because he will teach you how to exploit the community and how to oppress people to get their wealth.
Remember that miserliness, cowardice and greed appear to be different wicked qualities but they all arise from the same evil mentality of having no faith and no trust in Allah.
Your worst ministers will be the men who had been ministers to the despotic rulers before you and who had been a party o atrocities committed by them. Such persons should not be taken into your confidence and should not be trusted because they have aided sinners and have assisted tyrants and cruel rulers.
In their stead you can comfortably find persons who are equally wise and learned but who have not developed sinful and criminal mentalities, who have neither helped the tyrants in their tyrannies nor have they assisted them to carry on their sinful deeds. Such persons will prove the least troublesome to you. They will be the most helpful. They will sincerely sympathise with you. If you take them in your confidence they will sever their connections with your opponents. Keep such people with you as your companions in your informal company as well as in official gatherings in audience. From amongst such honest and humane companions and ministers some would receive your fullest confidence and trust. They are those who can always speak out the bitter truth to you and unreservedly and without fear of your status, can refuse to assist you or associate with you in the deeds which Allah does not like His good creatures to commit.
Select honest, truthful and pious people as your companions. Train them not to flatter you and not to seek your favour by false praises because flattery and false praises create vanity and conceit and they make a man lose sight of his real self and ignore his duties.
You should not treat good and bad people alike because in this way you will be discouraging good persons and at the same time emboldening the wicked to carry on their wickedness. Everyone should receive the treatment which his deeds make him deserve.
Try carefully to realize that a ruler can create goodwill in the minds of his subjects and can make them faithful and sincere to him only when he is kind and considerate to them, when he reduces their troubles, when he does not oppress them and when he never asks for things which are beyond their power.
These are the principles which you should keep in mind and act upon. Let your attitude be such that they do not lose faith in you because a good faith on their part will reduce many troubles of administration and will relieve you of many worries and anxieties. And so far as your confidence and trust is concerned, let it rest with those people whom you have tested in difficulties and whom you have befriended, but you should always mistrust those people whom you have wronged or who have proved themselves undeserving, inefficient or unfaithful.
Do not give up those practices and do not break those rules which good Muslims have evolved or introduced before you, which have created unity and amity among the various sections of the society and which have benefited the masses.
Do not break them and do not introduce innovations because if you do away with those good rules and traditions, the reward of having introduced them will go to those who evolved them and the punishment of having despoiled them will be your lot.

You must know, Maalik, that the people over whom you rule are divided into classes and grades and the prosperity and welfare of each class of the society individually and collectively are so interdependent upon the well-being of the other classes that the whole set-up represents a closely woven net and reciprocal aspect. One class cannot exist peacefully, cannot live happily and cannot work without the support and good wishes of the other.

Amongst them there are the soldiers of the army of Allah who defend His cause, the next class is that of the secretaries of the State to whom duties of writing out and issuing special or general orders are assigned, the third group is of the judges and magistrates to administer justice, the fourth is of officers who maintain law and order and guard the peace and prosperity of the country. Then there are common men, the Muslims who pay the taxes levied by the government, and non-Muslims who pay the taxes levied by the government, and non-Muslims who pay tribute to the State (in lieu of taxes). Then comes the class of men who carry on various professions and trades and the last but not the least are the poor and the have-nots who are considered as the lowest class of the society. The Merciful Allah has fixed rights and duties of each one of them. They have been either mentioned in His Book or explained through the instructions of the Holy Prophet (s). A complete code of them is preserved with us.

As far as the soldiers are concerned, they are by the commands of Allah a fortress and stronghold to guard and defend the subjects and the State. They are the ornaments of the ruler and the country. They provide power and protection to the religion. They propagate and preserve peace among mankind. In fact, they are the real guardians of peace and through them good internal administration can be maintained. The upkeep and maintenance of an army depends upon the taxes collected by the State out of which Allah has fixed for them a share. With this amount they provide for their requirements, maintain themselves and their arms in sound position to defend the religion and the cause of justice.

The army and the common men (common citizens who pay taxes or tributes) are two important classes, but in a Welfare State their well-being cannot be guaranteed without proper functioning and preservation of the other classes, the judges and magistrates, the secretaries of the State and the officers of various departments who collect various revenues, maintain law and order as well as preserve peace and amity among the diverse classes of the society. They also guard the rights and privileges of the citizens and look to the performances of various duties by individuals and classes. And the prosperity of this whole set-up depends upon the traders and industrialists. They act as a medium between the consumers and the suppliers. They collect the requirements of the society. They exert to provide goods. They open up shops, markets and trading centres. Thus providing the consumers with their necessities, they relieve the citizens of the need of running after their requisites of life.

Then comes the class of the poor and the disabled persons. It is absolutely necessary that they should be looked after, helped and well-provided for. The Merciful Allah has explained the ways and means of maintaining and providing for each of these classes. And everyone of this class has the right upon the ruler of the State that at least minimum necessities for its well-being and contented living are provided.

Remember, Maalik that Almighty Allah will not absolve any ruler from his obligations unless he sincerely tries his best to discharge his duties, invokes Allah to help him in their performance, remains steadfast and diligent on the path of truth and justice and bears all this whether the performance of these duties is congenial or hateful to him.

So far as the army is concerned its chief and commander should be a person who is most sincere and faithful to Allah, to the Holy Prophet (s) and to your Imam who is most pious, who is famous for his forbearance, clemency and gentleness, who is neither short-tempered nor does he get angry quickly, who sympathetically treats sincere excuses and accepts apologies, who is kind and compassionate with the weak, but severe against the strong and the powerful, who has no vindictiveness which might lead to violence or any inferiority complex or weak-mindedness which makes them helpless and dejected. To find and select such persons you should have contacts with pious and noble families with high ideals and exalted traditions, families well-known for their bravery and courage and generosity and magnanimity. They are the people who may be considered as sources of magnificence and sublimity of character and fountain-heads of piety and good deeds.

When you have found and selected such persons then keep an eye over them and watch them as parents watch their children so that you may find out if there appears any change in their behaviour. Treat them kindly and sympathetically. Do not grudge highest considerations to them (if they rightly deserve) and do not refuse small mercies. This kind of treatment will create reciprocal tendencies in them and they will trust you and will be faithful to you. Under the impression that you have paid enough attention to their major necessities and wants, do not close your eyes to their minor requirements and needs because small favours often bear better fruits though careful attention to major necessities is very important. Among the military officers those should receive your highest respect and consideration who pay most attention to the needs of the soldiers under their command who come forward to help the soldiers with their personal means and property so that the soldiers may lead a happy and contented life and may have full confidence of the future of their families and children.

If the soldiers are thus satisfied and are free from anxieties and care then they will bravely and wholeheartedly face the conflicts. Your constant attention towards the officers and soldiers will make them love you more and more.

The thing which should most gladden the heart of a ruler is the fact that his State is being ruled on the principles of equity and justice and that his subjects love him. And your subjects will only love you when they have no grievance against you. Their sincerity and loyalty will be proved if they gather around you to support your government, when they

accept your authority without considering it an unbearable burden on their heads and when they do not secretly wish your rule to come to an end. So let them have as many justifiable hopes in you as they can and fulfil as many as you reasonably can. Speak well of those who deserve your praise. Appreciate the good deeds done by them and let these good actions be known publicly.
The correct and timely publicity of noble actions and golden deeds creates more zeal in the minds of the brave and emboldens the cowards and the weaklings. You must know and realize the good deeds done by every single individual so that the credit of noble deeds done by one may not be given to another. Do not underestimate and underpay the good work done. Similarly do not overpay a work simply because it has been done by a very important person and do not let his position and prestige be the cause of overvaluation of the merit of his work and at the same time do not undervalue a great deed if it is done by a very ordinary person or a commoner. Let equity, justice and fairplay be your motto.
When you are faced with problems which you cannot solve or with a difficult situation from which you cannot escape or when uncertain and doubtful circumstances confuse and perplex you, then turn to Allah and the Holy Prophet (s) because Allah has thus ordered those whom He wants to guide. The way to turn to Allah is to act diligently according to the clear and explicit orders given in His Holy Book and to the turn to the Holy Prophet (s) means to follow those of his orders about which there is no doubt and ambiguity and which have been generally accepted to be correctly recorded.
So far as dispensing of justice is concerned, you have to be very careful in selecting officers for the same. You must select people of excellent character and high calibre and with meritorious records. They must possess the following qualifications: Abundance of litigations and complexity of cases should not make them lose their temper.
When they realize that they have committed a mistake in judgement they should not insist on it by trying to justify it. When truth is made clear to them or when the right path opens up before them, they should not consider it below their dignity to correct the mistake made or to undo the wrong done by them. They should not be corrupt, covetous or greedy. They should not be satisfied with ordinary enquiry or scrutiny of a case, but should scrupulously go through all the pros and cons, they must examine every aspect of the problem carefully, and whenever and wherever they find doubtful and ambiguous points, they must stop, go through further details, clear the points, and only then proceed with their decisions. They must attach the greatest importance to reasoning, arguments and proofs. They should not get tired of lengthy discussions and arguments. They must exhibit patience and perseverance in scanning the details, in testing the points presented as true, in sifting facts from fiction and when truth is revealed to them they must pass their judgements without fear, favour or prejudice.
They should not develop vanity and conceit when compliments and praises are showered upon them. They should not be mislead by flattery and cajolery. But unfortunately they are few persons having such characteristics. After you have selected such men to act as your judges, make it a point to go through some of their judgements and to check their proceedings. Pay them handsomely so that their needs are fully satisfied and they are not required to beg or borrow or resort to corruption. Give them such a prestige and position in your State that none of your courtiers or officers can overlord them or bring harm to them. Let judiciary be above every kind of executive pressure or influence, above fear or favour, intrigue or corruption. Take every particular care of this aspect because before your appointment this State was under the sway of corrupt, time-serving and wealth-grasping opportunists who were lewd, greedy and vicious and who wanted nothing out of a State but a sinful consent of amassing wealth and pleasures for themselves.
Then come the officers of your State. You must supervise their work. They must be appointed after a careful scrutiny of their capabilities and characters. These appointments must be made originally on probation without any kind of favouritism being shown or influence being accepted otherwise tyranny, corruption and misrule will reign in your State. While selecting your officers take care to select experienced and honourable persons, members of respectable families who had served Islam during its early days because these are usually of noble character and good repute. They are not greedy and cannot be easily bribed. They mostly have before them the ultimate result of their thoughts and their deeds. Keep them also well-paid so that they may not be tempted to lower their standard of morality and may not misappropriate the cash of the State which they hold in their trust and if after being paid handsomely they prove dishonest, then you will be right to punish them. Therefore keep a careful watch over their system of work and rule. You may also appoint trustworthy and honest men to keep a watch over the activities of these officers. The knowledge that they are being watched secretly will keep them away from dishonesty, misrule, malpractice and tyrannizing the subjects. Protect your government from dishonest officers. If you find any of them dishonest and your confidential intelligence service submits acceptable proofs of his dishonesty, then you must punish him. This may be corporal punishment besides dismissal from service and taking back from him all which he has dishonestly collected. He must be humiliated and must be made to realize the infamy of his wicked deeds. His humiliation and punishment must be given publicly so that it may serve as a lesson and a deterrent to others.
So far as collection of land revenues and taxes are concerned you must always keep in view the welfare of the tax-payers which is of primary importance than the taxes themselves because these taxes and the tax-payers are the original sources on which the welfare of your State and its subjects depend.
A State really lives upon the revenues collected from the tax-payers. Therefore, more importance should be attached to the fertility of land than to the collection of taxes because actual taxable capacity of people rests upon the fertility of

the land. The ruler, who does not pay attention to the prosperity of his subjects and fertility of the land but concentrates only on collection of revenues, lays waste the land and consequently ruins the State and brings destruction to the creatures of Allah. His rule cannot last for long.

If the tax-payers complain to you of the heavy incidence to taxation, of any accidental calamity, of the vagaries of the monsoons, of the recession of the means of irrigation, of floods or destruction of their crops on account of excessive rainfall and if their complaints are true, then reduce their taxes. This reduction should be such that it provides them opportunities to improve their conditions and eases them of their troubles.

Decrease in State-income due to such reasons should not depress you because the best investment for a ruler is to help his subjects at the time of their difficulties. They are the real wealth of a country and any investment on them even in the form of reduction of taxes, will be returned to the State in the shape of the prosperity of its cities and improvement of the country at large. At the same time you will be in a position to command and secure their love, respect and praises along with the revenues. Will that not be a lasting happiness?

Not only this, but your benign rule and humane treatment will so affect them that they will come to your help at the time of your difficulties and you will be able to rely on their support. Your kindness, your clemency and your justice will be a kind of moral training to them, and the contented, happy and prosperous life, for which they will be grateful to you, will be the best support, strongest protection and the greatest treasury for you.

Later if such circumstances arrive that you find yourself in need of their support, their help, their confidence, their wealth and their man-power, then they will have no grudge against you.

Remember, Maalik! If a country is prosperous and if its people are well-to-do then it will happily and willingly bear any burden.

The poverty of the people is the actual cause of the devastation and ruination of a country and the main cause of the poverty of the people is the desire of its ruler and officers to amass wealth and possessions whether by fair or foul means. They are afraid of losing their posts or positions and sway or rule and want to make the most during the shortest time at their disposal. They never learn any lesson from the history of nations and never pay any attention to the commands of Allah.

You will also have to be very careful about your secretaries. You should entrust your work only to those who are the best among them.

Specially the affairs which are of confidential nature and which deal with secrets, and the security of the State should be entrusted only to men of noble character because men who are intoxicated with power, position and prestige carry on propaganda and speak against the government in public, they openly misbehave with you and consider themselves so important as to ignore you or your orders in financial transactions essential to the State, they avoid placing necessary papers before you or attending to important correspondence.

Particular care should be taken that when the officers make contracts on behalf of the government or sign agreements, these contracts and agreements are not defective or harmful to the State, if they are negotiating any treaties and alliances they do not overlook or forsake the interests of the State or if they find the State in a weak and embarrassing position on account of unfavourable terms of treaties or due to intrigues, they should be able to find sensible ways out of them. See that they know and realize their proper place and rank, because he who does not realize his place and position will never understand those of others.

One more thing about these officers: You must remember not to select them for very important posts and not to trust them completely simply because you have found them honest, diligent, trustworthy and intelligent and have formed a good opinion about them because there are some people who, when it suits them, pretend honesty, diligence and fidelity and can put on the garb of piety and virtue and thus find their ways in the hearts of the rulers, though actually they are neither honest nor diligent nor wise nor sagacious. Therefore, you must always look to the record or reputation of the services of such men during previous regimes; more importance should be attached to their good reputation. This kind of selection and supervision will prove that you are faithful to Allah and that you wish your Imam well.

Thus you must appoint one officer as the Head of each important branch of your government. He should have knowledge and wisdom enough to cope successfully with all the intricate problems of his department and should be diligent enough to cope with extensive work.

Remember well that if there is any defect in your officers and you are tolerating it, then you and only you are responsible for all those evils.

I want to advise you about your businessmen and industrialists. Treat them well, and order your officers to follow the same policy.

There may be local businessmen carrying on their trade in certain places or those who send their merchandise from one place to another. There may even be those who import and export goods. Similarly there may be industrialists and manufacturers as well as industrial labour or men engaged in the handicrafts. They all deserve sympathy, protection and good treatment.

They all are the sources of wealth to the country. They provide goods for the consumers. Most of these traders carry and convey these goods from across deserts, seas and over open lands and mountains, their consignments are brought

from distant lands, often from places which are not easy to approach and where usually people do not care or do not dare to go. These businessmen are usually peace-loving people, not given to mischievous disturbances and seditious fomentation. You must look after their interest and protect them whether they are trading in your cities or towns or whether they are travelling over the countries carrying goods from place to place.

One more thing about these traders and industrialists. While treating them most sympathetically you must keep an eye over there activities as well.

You know they are usually stingy misers, intensely self-centered and selfish, suffering from the obsession of grasping and accumulating wealth.

They often hoard their goods to get more profit out of them by creating scarcity and by indulging in black-marketing. Such a condition is extremely injurious to the public on one hand and disgraceful to the ruler on the other.

You must put a stop to all such practices because the Holy Prophet (s) has explicitly prohibited such practices. Remember that trade should go on between the buyers and sellers according to correct measures and weights and on such reasonable terms that neither the consumers nor the suppliers should have to face losses. But even with all the sympathetic treatments accorded to them and with all the facilities provided to them, if the traders and industrialists carry on hoarding and black-marketing, then you must punish them according to the intensity of their crime.

Then I want to caution you about the poor. Fear Allah about their conditions and you attitude towards them. They have no support, no resources and no opportunities. They are poor, they are destitute and many of them are cripples and unfit for work. Some of them come out begging and some (who maintain self-respect) do not beg, but their conditions speak of their distress, poverty, destitution and wants. For the sake of Allah, Maalik, protect them and their rights. He has laid the responsibility of this upon your shoulders. You must fix a share for them from Baytul Mal (the Government Treasury). Besides this reservation in cash, you must also reserve a share in kind of crops etc. from government granaries in cities where food-grains are stored as are cultivated on State-owned land because in these storage the share of those living far away from any particular city is equal to the share of those living nearby.

Let me remind you once again that you are made responsible for guarding the rights of the poor people and for looking after their welfare. Take care that the conceit of your position and vanity of wealth may not deceive you to lose sight of such a grave and important responsibility. Yours is such an important post that you cannot claim immunity from the responsibility of even minor errors of commission or omission with an excuse that you were engrossed in the major problems of the State which you have solved diligently.

Therefore, be very careful of the welfare of the poor people. Do not be arrogant and vain against them. Remember that you have to take particular care of those who cannot reach you, whose poverty-stricken and disease-ridden sight may be hateful to you, and whom society treats with disgust, detestation and contempt. You should be a source of comfort, love and respect to them. Appoint a respectable, honest and pious person - a person who fears Allah and who can treat them honourably, order him to find out everything about them and to submit a report to you.

Then treat these poor people in such a way that on the Day of Judgement you can plead your case successfully before Allah because of all classes of your subjects this class deserves more of your attention, sympathy and fair-deal.

Though everyone of these poor persons deserves your sympathy and you will have to do justice to His cause to achieve His favour, yet you should pay more attention to young orphans and old cripples. They neither have any support nor can they conveniently come out begging. They cannot reach you; therefore, you must reach them.

Remember that the fulfillment of this obligation and duty is considered as a tiresome burden by most of the rulers but to those who desire to achieve His Blessings and to enter into His Realm, even this work seems light and congenial. They bear it happily, dutifully and sincerely. They find pleasures in it and they believe in the promise made by Allah.

Out of your hours of work, fix a time for the complainants and for those who want to approach you with their grievances. During this time you should do no other work but hear them and pay attention to their complaints and grievances. For this purpose you must arrange public audience for them during this audience, for the sake of Allah, treat them with kindness, courtesy and respect. Do not let your army and police be in the audience hall at such times so that those who have grievances against your regime may speak to you freely, unreservedly and without fear.

All this is a necessary factor of your rule because I have often heard the Holy Prophet (s) saying, “That nation or regime, where that rights of the depressed, destitute and suppressed are not guarded and where the mighty and powerful persons are not forced to accede these rights, cannot achieve salvation”. You must remember that in those audiences the most common men will gather. therefore, if you find them misbehaving, becoming unmannerly or if you feel that their talk is irrelevant, tolerate them; do not be rude and do not insult them, so that Allah may be kind and merciful to you and may reward you for obeying His commands explicitly. Treat them courteously, hear their grievances patiently and if you are forced to reject their demands then reject them in such a way that your rejection may please them as much as your grants.

Then there are certain duties which only you will have to perform and which none of your officers can carry out. Among them are replies to the letters of your commissioners and governors and are beyond the jurisdiction or preview of your secretaries. If you find that your officers are not attending as much to the complaints of the public as they should, then you should personally attend to them. You must finish a day's work on that day only because each day will bring its own special work for you. Reserve your best time for prayers to Allah, though every work of the State is the work of Allah,

especially, if you are sincere and honest, and if your subjects are happy with your rule and are safe from your oppression.
Among those duties that you are to perform diligently must be your daily prayers. These should be offered sincerely and persistently. You must fix times for this during days and nights. You must tax your bodily strength for this duty though it may tire you. Your observance of prayers should be sincere and faultless and should neither be so long as to tire out those who follow you in these prayers nor so short as to be faulty and defective because amongst those who follow you during the prayers, there may be some sick persons, while others may have to attend to some important work. When the Holy Prophet (s) sent me to Yemen I asked him how to lead the prayers. He advised me, “Offer prayers like a weak and old person and be kind to the faithful” (so that weak and old persons may follow your prayers easily and happily).
You must take care not to cut yourself off from the public. Do not place a curtain of false prestige between you and those over whom you rule. Such pretensions and show of pomp and pride are in reality manifestations of inferiority complex and vanity. The result of such an attitude is that you remain ignorant of the conditions of your subjects and of the actual cases of the events occurring in the State.
You will fail to realize comparative importance of events taking place and may attach great significance to minor events and may slip over important facts, similarly you may attach importance to mediocre or insignificant people and may ignore real men of consequence; and what is more, you may lose the power of distinction between good and bad and may take one for the other or hopelessly mix up the two. After all a ruler is as much a human being as any other man and he may remain ignorant of facts of which his officers want to keep him in the dark (and on which the public may throw light). Thus truth may get mixed up with falsehood and may not be distinguished because there are no birthmarks on the forehead of truth that it may be easily differentiated from falsehood, one has to search for facts and sift realities from fictions, only then can one reach the truth. Think for yourself, there are only two categories of rulers and you may belong to one of them.
You may either be a pious, sincere and diligent ruler, doing the right thing at the right moment and following the principles of justice and equity and you may be protecting rights of others and doing your best to fulfil your obligations, in that case why hide from the public, why draw a curtain around yourself! Or you may be a miser refusing to be generous to anyone, in that case people will gradually come to know of this trait of your character and will gradually give up asking for favours from you but do not overlook the fact that most of their demands will have nothing to do with your private purse, they will be about the rights of people, obligations of the State, complaints against the State, oppressions, and solicitations of justice, then why try to avoid hearing these requests!
You should never overlook the fact that around the rulers there usually are certain privileged persons (relatives and friends). They may often try to take advantage of their status and may resort to selfishness, intrigues, fraud, corruption and oppression. If you find such people around you then do away with them (however closely connected they may be with you), immediately bring an end to the scandal and clear your surroundings of all such moral and spiritual filth.
You must never give lands in permanent lease with all proprietary and ownership rights to your friends and relatives. You must never allow them to take possession of the source of water-supply or lands which have special utility for the communes. If they get possession of such holdings they will oppress others to derive undue benefits and thus gather all the fruits for themselves leaving for you a bad reputation in this world and punishment in the next.
Be fair in dispensing justice. Punish those who deserve punishment even though he may be your near relation or a close friend and even if such an action may give you pangs of sorrow and grief. Bear such a sorrow patiently and hope for Divine reward. I assure you this will bear good fruits.
If on account of your strict measures people get suspicious of your behaving like a tyrant and oppressor, then come out openly before them and explain to them the reasons of your actions and let them see the facts for themselves and realize the truth. This will give training to your mind, will be an act of kindness to the subjects and the confidence thus reposed in them will make them support justice and truth while you will achieve the end you have in view of obtaining their support in the cause of truth.
If your enemy invites you to a Peace Treaty that will be agreeable to Allah, then never refuse to accept such an offer because peace will bring rest and comfort to your armies, will relieve you of anxieties and worries, and will bring prosperity and affluence to your people. But even after such treaties be very careful of the enemies and do not place too much confidence in their promises because they often resort to Peace Treaty to deceive and delude you and take advantage of your negligence, carelessness and trust. At the same time be very careful, never break your promise with your enemy, never forsake the protection or support that you have offered to him, never go back upon your words, and never violate the terms of the treaty. You must even risk your life to fulfil the promises given and the terms settled because of all the obligations laid by Almighty Allah upon man (in respect to other men) there is none so important as to keep one's promises when made.
Though people may differ in their religions and ideologies and may have divergent views upon various problems of State, yet they all agree that promises when made must be fulfilled. Even the heathens take care to keep the promises made among themselves because they have seen and realised the evil effects of breaking promises. Therefore, take very particular care of promises made, never go back upon the words given, never go into the offensive without

previously challenging and giving an ultimatum. Deception and fraud even against your enemy is a deception against Allah and none but a wretched sinner would dare do that.
Allah has given promises and treaties the high rank of being messengers of peace and prosperity and through His Kindness and Mercy has made them a common desire (of keeping promises) in the minds of all men and a common requirement for all human beings. He has made them such a shelter and asylum that everybody desires to be under their protection.
Therefore, there should be no mental reservation, no fraud, no deception and no underlying meanings in between the lines when you make a promise or conclude a treaty. Do not use such words and phrases in your promises and treaties as have possibilities of being translated in more than one way or as may have various interpretations and many explanations, let there be no ambiguity in them, and let them be clear, precise and to the point. And when once a treaty has been finally concluded, do not try to take advantage of any ambiguous word or phrase in it. If you find yourself in a critical situation on account of the treaty made in the cause of Allah, then try to face the situation and bear the consequences bravely and do not try to back out of the terms that account, because to face such perplexing situations as may gain His Rewards and Blessings is better than to break your promises on that account and earn that about which you feel nervous and for which you will have to answer Allah and which may bring down His Wrath upon you in this world and damnation in the next.
Beware of the sin of shedding blood without religious justification and sanction because there is nothing quicker to bring down the Wrath of Allah, to take away His Blessings, to make you more deserving of His Wrath and to reduce the span of your life than to shed innocent blood. On the Day of Judgement Allah will first attend to sins of bloodshed carried out by man against man. Therefore, never try to strengthen your power, position and prestige by shedding innocent blood. Such murders instead of making your position strong will not only considerably weaken it but may also transfer your power totally, taking it away from you and entrusting it to somebody else.
If you have intentionally murdered a man then no excuse shall be acceptable to Allah or to me because punishment of such a crime is necessary.
And if you kill a man by mistake without any intention or motive of killing or while delivering legal penalties, your whip, sword or hand unintentionally and inadvertently deals a fatal blow because even a forcefully delivered slap or box on the ear may cause death, then do not, on account of your prestige and position, refuse paying the compensation to the heirs.
Beware and do not develop the trait of self-admiration and self-appreciation. Do not get conceited of the good points that you find in your good character or good deeds that you have done. Do not let flattery and cajolery make you vain and egoist. Remember that of all the cunning ruses of the devil to undo good deeds of the pious people and to affect their piety, flattery and false praises are the ones on which it relies the most.
Do not boast of the favours and kindnesses that you have done to your subjects and do not try to make them realise this, do not think too much of the good that you have done to them, and do not go back upon the promises made, all these three habits are very ugly features of one's character. The practice of boasting over the favours done undoes the good done, the habit of exaggerating and thinking very highly of our good actions will make us lose the guidance of Allah, and the habit of breaking one's promises is disliked both by Allah and by man. The Merciful Allah says, “It is most hateful in the sight of Allah, to say something and not to practice it.” [Qur’an, 61:3].
Do not be hasty and do not precipitate your decisions and actions, when the time comes for an action to be done, or a decision to be taken, then do not be lazy and do not waste time and do not show weakness. When you do not find a true way to do the thing on hand, then do not persist on the wrong way and when find a correct solution, then do not be lethargic in adopting it.
In short do everything at a proper time and in a proper way and keep everything in its proper place.
Do not reserve for yourself anything which is a common property of all and in which others have equal rights. Do not close your eyes from glaring malpractice of the officers, miscarriage of justice and misuse of rights because you will be held responsible for the wrong thus done to others. In the near future your wrong practices and maladministration will be exposed and you will be held responsible and punished for the wrong done to the helpless and oppressed people.
Take care and keep control over you temper, your anger and your desire to be arrogant and vain. Take care of your hands when you are out to deliver punishment and of the sharpness of your tongue when you are saying harsh things. The best way to achieve this is not to be hasty in making remarks and to delay in delivering punishment so that you may keep your temper under control and are not overexcited.
And you cannot achieve this unless you constantly remember that you have to return to Allah and unless His fear overcomes every other sentiment.
You must always try to remember the good and useful things done in the past, activities of a just and benign regime, good deeds done by it, good laws promulgated, instructions of the Holy Prophet (s), commands of Allah given in His Holy Book and things that you have seen me doing or have heard me saying. Follow the good actions and advice found therein. Similarly, follow carefully the pieces of advice contained in these orders. Through them I have tried to teach you all that can be taught about a good regime. I have done my duty towards you so that you may not go astray and your mind may not crave for base desires. If it does then you will have no excuse before Allah.

I beseech Allah that by His Limitless Mercy and by His Supreme Might He may grant our prayers, that He may lead both of us to the Divine Guidance of achieving His Pleasure, of successfully pleading our cases before Him, justifying our deeds before man, of gaining good repute, of leaving good results of our benign and just rule with ever expanding prosperity and ever increasing welfare of the State and of meeting our ends as martyrs and pious persons, as our return is towards Him only.

May the peace of Allah be upon the Holy Prophet (s) and His chosen descendants.

Letter 54

This is a letter written by Imam Ali (a) to Talha and Zubayr and sent to them through Imran bin Hasin Khuza'i.

Imran was a companion of the Holy Prophet (s). He had embraced Islam before the Battle of Khaybar and from then onwards he remained in his company. He was a very pious person and one of the very authentic narrators of the traditions of the Holy Prophet (s). Besides Nahjul Balaagha, this letter has also been narrated by Abu Ja'far Iskaafi in his famous book "Al-Maqamat fi Manaqib Amir al-Mu'minin".

You may try as much as you like to hide the fact and to draw a curtain over it but both of you know very well that I did not approach the people to get their oath of allegiance but they came to me with their desire to make me their Amir (ruler). I did not extend my hands towards them so that they might swear the oath of allegiance to me but they themselves extended their hands towards me. And you two were among those who had flocked around me to swear the oath.

You all came to me to take the oath not because you were afraid of my power to oppress or tyrannize you, nor did you expect any monetary gain from me. If you two had taken the oath of allegiance of your own free will and without any compulsion, then do not break this oath, come back to it, repent before Allah of your having broken the oath. And if your action of swearing the oath of allegiance was not a sincere act done with pleasure and free-will, then your behaviour of pretending obedience and fidelity in the beginning and revolting against me at a later time does not speak well of your character and which serves as an argument in my favour and against you.

Upon my life you had no more pressing need than other Muhajirs to hide your real intentions from me and to hypocritically pretend fidelity and allegiance. In fact there was more justification then for you not to swear the oath of allegiance and not to offer your fidelity than to go back upon your oath and promise now.

You two were wealthy people and had your clans to support and back you. Those clans were then as they are now, powerful tribes. You were not forced to come and take the oath. Do you know what made you then behave like a hypocrite and now like a freed-slave? They were your ulterior motives.

You are telling people that I am responsible for the murder of Caliph Uthman. To bear witness to the fact as to who is responsible for the murder of the Caliph, you two or I, there are people in Madina, who are impartial. They have never sided you or me and have kept themselves aloof from me from the very beginning. Shall we ask their opinion as to who is responsible for this assassination? Their opinion will settle the question once and for all, will lay the responsibility on proper shoulders and will disclose the part each one of us has played of helping the caliph as much as possible or exciting the people against him and aiding and abetting the murder.

My respected friends! Give up your present attitude though I know that by declaring the falsity of your position today you stand the chance of being ridiculed and disgraced yet by persisting in your wrong and wicked attitude you will tomorrow certainly earn the disgrace in this world as well as the punishment in the next.

Letter 55

A letter to Mu’awiya.

You must know and understand that Allah has made this world a place where one is to stay only to provide for a happy life for himself in the Hereafter by his deeds. People are put to test here so that they may be rewarded according to their merits.
Our life does not end here and we are not created only for this world. Nor are we ordered to concentrate our energies only to acquire pleasures, power and pomp here. We are brought here simply to be tested in accordance to our knowledge, intentions and activities.
You are being tested through me and I am being tested through you. Each one of us is to be an evidence of the demonstration of the intentions and deeds of the other - whether they have been pious or sinful. You began by misinterpreting the Holy Qur'an and on the basis of these misinterpretations you started grasping power and wealth and began oppressing and tyrannizing the people. Your next unholy action was to call me responsible for an action (murder of Caliph Uthman) of which my tongue and hands were both innocent.
You with the Syrians tried your best to bring this deed to my door. The learned from your side persuaded the ignorant and influential people, and drove the commoners to rise against me.
Fear Allah and do let Satan drive you wherever it wants, think of death and the life after death because that is the only resting-place for you and me and for every human being. Be afraid of the Wrath of Almighty Allah which may throw you into such a calamity that it will not only be an end of you but an end of your dynasty.
I swear, and my oath is such that I have no intention of breaking it, that if fate so arranges as to bring us face to face against each other then I shall not leave the battlefield: “Until Allah judges between us, and He is the best Judge” [Qur’an, 7:87].

Letter 56

When Imam Ali (a) appointed Shuray bin Hani as commanding officer of the vanguard of his army, which was marching towards Syria, he gave Hani the following instructions.

Day and night keep the fear of Allah in your mind. Be afraid of this alluring and vicious world, never trust it. If you do not check yourself from the desire of acquiring inordinate things then your mind will surely drive you towards losses. Therefore, have a complete watch and command over yourself and at the time of anger and annoyance see that you do not lose your temper.

Letter 57

While leaving Madina for Basra, Imam Ali (a) wrote the following letter to the people of Kufa.

It is a wonderful epistle. It invites people to judge his intentions and actions.

After glorifying Allah and praising the Holy Prophet (s) let it be known to you that I am leaving this city either as an oppressor or oppressed, either I am revolting against the people or some of them have conspired to revolt against the people or against me. Whatever the case may be I invite in the Name of Allah those to whom this letter reaches, to come and see for themselves whether I am in the right or on the wrong. If they find me on the path of truth and justice they may help me and if they find that I am on the wrong then they can reason me out of it.

Letter 58

A letter sent by Imam Ali (a) to the people of various provinces, giving them the causes of the Battle of Siffin.

The thing began in this way: We and the Syrians were facing each other while we had common faith in one Allah, in the same Prophet (s) and on the same principles and canons of religion. So far as faith in Allah and the Holy Prophet (s) was concerned we never wanted them (the Syrians) to believe in anything over and above or other than what they were believing in and they did not want us to change our faith. Both of us were united on these principles. The point of contention between us was the question of the murder of Uthman. It had created the split. They wanted to lay the murder at my door while I am actually innocent of it.

I advised them that this problem cannot be solved by excitement. Let the excitement subside, let us cool down; let us do away with sedition and revolt; let the country settle down into a peaceful atmosphere and when once a stable regime is formed and the right authority is accepted, then let this question be dealt with on the principles of equity and justice because only then the authority will have power enough to find the criminals and to bring them to justice. They refused to accept my advice and said that they wanted to decide the issue on the point of the sword.

When they thus rejected my proposal of peace and kept on sabre rattling threats, then naturally the battle, which was furious and bloody, started. When they saw defeat facing them across the battlefield, when many of them were killed, and many more wounded, then they went down on their knees and proposed the same thing, which I had proposed before the bloodshed had begun.

I accepted their proposal so that their desire might be fulfilled, my intentions of accepting the principles of truth and justice and acting according to these principles might become clear and they might have no cause to complain against me.

Now whoever adheres firmly to the promises made will be the one whose salvation will be saved by Allah and one who will try to go back upon the promises made, will fall deeper and deeper into heresy, error and loss. His eyes will be closed to realities and truth in this world and he will be punished in the next world.

Letter 59

To Aswad bin Qatiba, the Governor of Hulwan.

After glorifying Allah and praising the Holy Prophet (s) let it be known to you that if a ruler develops different inclinations and favours about different people over whom he rules, then his treatment with them will not be on the basis of equity and impartiality. And this will not allow him to be just and fair to all. But so far as justice and equity are concerned your treatment of all should be fair and unprejudiced. Remember that nothing can compensate for tyranny and oppression.

Keep yourself away from what you consider bad and evil in others. Try your best to fulfill the obligations laid down by Allah upon you and keep on hoping for His Reward and fear His Wrath because this world is a place for trials and tests and whoever wastes his time here will repent in the Hereafter.

Remember that nothing will ever make you independent of the Blessings of Allah and He has made it incumbent upon you to have complete control over your own self, that you, to the best of your ability, protect and guard the people over whom you rule. In this way you will be benefited more than others whom you benefit.

Letter 60

The following is a circular-letter sent to those governors and State officers, through whose territory the armies of Imam Ali (a) were to pass.

From the creature of Allah Ali bin Abi Taalib (a) to the governors and the collectors of those provinces through which his armies are to pass.

After glorifying Allah and praising the Holy Prophet (s), be it known to you that I am sending some detachments of army which will, Allah willing shortly pass through your cities and provinces. I have issued them the orders which Allah wants them to obey: They should not molest anybody or harm any person or anything. I want to inform you and your subjects that if the soldiers misbehave themselves or if they take anything, their action is against my orders.

Except for the condition that they accidentally fall short of the ration and can find no way to appease their appetite, if they take anything from anybody they are to be punished. You may punish them. But take care and do not allow the foolish and insolent people of your place to quarrel with them or insult them or interfere with or obstruct the things that I have permitted them. I shall also be following the army. You may report to me of any excess or violence committed within your jurisdiction, of any awkward and difficult position in which you find yourself, or of any harshness or atrocity which was perpetrated in your province and which you cannot redeem without the help of Allah and your Imam. If you report all such affairs to me, Allah willing I shall attend to them and settle them to the satisfaction of all.

Letter 61

A letter from Imam Ali (a) to Kumayl bin Ziyad Nakha'i, expressing his displeasure and rebuking him in leaving his province unguarded and allowing the army of the enemy to enter and carry on loot.

He was the Governor of Hayit and had not properly defended the province against the Syrian guerrillas. After their attack and loot he wanted permission of Imam Ali (a) to take revenge upon the Syrian province of Kirkisiya. Imam Ali (a) replied to him in the following letter.

It is wrong to a person to disregard and neglect the duty entrusted to him and try to take up the work entrusted to somebody else and at a time when he is not required to do it. Such an attitude indicates a weak and harmful mentality. Your desire to invade Kirkisiya and to leave your province undefended and unattended shows the confusion of your mind. By such an action you will convert yourself into a kind of bridge which your enemy can cross conveniently to reach your friends.

Thus you will be a useless auxiliary who has neither power nor prestige nor dignity, who cannot stop his enemy's in-roads, nor can crush him, and who cannot defend his subject nor can he be of any use or help to his ruler.

Letter 62

A letter to the Egyptians which Imam Ali (a) handed over to Maalik bin Haarith Ashtar to take with him when he was appointed as the Governor of that province.

The Almighty Allah, Glory be to Him, entrusted our Holy Prophet (s) with the mission of warning the people of the evil effects of their vicious actions and of bearing testimony to the truth actually taught and preached by other prophets. When the Holy Prophet (s) passed away, the Muslims started a tug-of-war for the caliphate. I swear by Allah that at that juncture it could not even be imagined that the Arabs would snatch the seat of the caliphate from the family and descendants of the Holy Prophet (s) and that they would be swearing the oath of allegiance for the caliphate to a different person.

At every stage I kept myself aloof from that struggle of supremacy and power-politics till I found the heretics had openly taken to heresy and schism and were trying to undermine and ruin the religion preached by our Holy Prophet (s). I felt afraid that, even after seeing and recognizing the evil, if I did not stand up to help Islam and the Muslims it would be a worse calamity to me than my losing authority and power over you, which was only a transient and short-lived affair. Therefore, when I stood up amidst the sweeping surge of innovations and schism the dark clouds of heresy dispersed, falsehood and schism were crushed and the religion was saved.

I swear by Allah that if I alone come out to face them and if all the world joins them, I shall neither feel nervous nor will I attach any care to their following. By the Grace of Allah, I know fully well what kind of reprobates they are and how they persist in vice and sin.

I am very anxious to reach the Realm of Allah and I earnestly hope and pray for His Blessings and Favours. But it grieves me to see that this nation and country is being ruled by uneducated, unwise and vicious rulers. They grasp the wealth of the country and drive its people into slavery. They hate pious and good people and quarrel or fight with them. They gather heretics and sinners around them and are happy in such company. You have had experience of some of them. One of them was punished for drinking wine. Among this crowd there is a man who did not embrace Islam until he found Islam to be not a faith or religion but a powerful State offering enormous possibility of gaining power and wealth. If I had no desire of saving Islam and Islamic society from the influence and sway of such people, I would not have called you for Jihad, I would not have tried to make you see the reality of the situation, I would not have exerted myself to assemble you and I would not have persuaded you to defend the cause of Allah and finding you so indifferent towards the good of Islam and observing your reluctance to help its cause, I would have left you to your condition.

Do you not see and realize that the boundaries of your State are getting shorter and shorter daily and parts of your kingdom are being snatched and usurped, your properties are being confiscated and your cities are being invaded. May Allah have Mercy upon you. Come out to defend your country, your property and your religion from the in-roads of your enemies. Do not be lazy, careless and cowardly, otherwise your lot will be only disgrace.

Remember, a warrior is always wary and vigilant and never careless and negligent. Whoever is careless about his cause, his enemy will not sleep over this advantage.

Letter 63

Abdullah bin Qays, better known in history as Abu Musa Ash'ari, was a man with weak faith, more inclined to look after his worldly interest than the cause of religion.

At the beginning of the Caliphate of Imam Ali (a) he was in Kufa. When he learnt that Talha and Zubayr along with Ummul Mu'minin, Aisha, had revolted against the Caliphate of Imam Ali (a) and had declared a war against him and had made Basra as their Headquarters and Imam Ali (a) had also started mobilising an army against them and had invited the people of Kufa to join that army, after realizing that the party of Talha and Zubayr was also a very rich and influential group and that it would be a wise action to be friendly with both the parties, he started saying, "Though Ali was the lawful caliph of Muslims, yet it was not correct for him to fight against other Muslims". Imam Ali (a) came to know that Abu Musa though professing his faith in him, was yet persuading people not to help him (Imam Ali (a)). Thereupon, he sent the following letter to Abu Musa through Imam Hasan (a).

From the creature of Allah, Ali bin Abi Taalib to Abdullah bin Qays (Abu Musa Ash'ari).
After glorifying Allah and praising the Holy Prophet (s) let it be known to you that I have received reports which may be considered favourable to you, and yet at the same time may be deemed against you (that you on one hand declare me to be a lawful caliph and in the same breath you persuade others not to come to my help). As soon as my messenger reaches you, get ready, come out of your retreat, invite your people to join me and come yourself. If you are convinced that I am on the right side, then you must come to my help and if you feel uncertain, nervous or timid, then get you gone.
I swear by Allah that I shall not let you waver or adopt a double-cross policy. I shall not allow you to sit peacefully at home with a double face, one for each party and I shall expose you to the people. You will find yourself under suspicion from either group and you will be forced to declare your true inclinations.
This revolt which has made Basra as its Headquarters is not an easy joke as you have imagined it to be. It is a great tragedy and it shall have very far-reaching effects. It has to be faced with the calamities which accompany it or which will follow it. It will have to be fought and to get the better of. Therefore, I advise you to think carefully, control your weak and wavering mind and face your lot bravely. And if you are not satisfied with me or have no faith in me then you can with complete freedom go to the other side. You have my unreserved permission. But I am sure you will not be welcomed there.
And if you remain in my camp I shall not allow you to enjoy a restful sleep when Islam itself is in troubles and at war with the rebels. I swear by Allah that this decision of mine is the right step of a faithful Muslim in the right direction.

Letter 64

A reply to Mu’awiya's letter.

It is correct as you say that in pre-Islamic days we were united and at peace with each other. But have you realized that dissensions and disunity between us started with the dawn of Islam. The reason was that we accepted and preached Islam and you remained heathen. The condition now is that we are faithful and staunch followers of Islam and you have revolted against it. Even your original acceptance was not sincere, it was simple hypocrisy. When you saw that all the big people of Arabia had embraced Islam and had gathered under the banner of the Holy Prophet (s) you also walked in (after the Fall of Makkah.)

In your letter you have falsely accused me of killing Talha and Zubayr, driving Ummul Mu'minin Aisha from her home at Madina and choosing Kufa and Basra as my residence. Even if all that you say against me is correct you have nothing to do with them, you are not harmed by these incidents and I have not to apologize to you for any of them.

You have threatened that you are coming out to fight against me with a large horde of Muhajirs and Ansar. Do tell me who these Muhajirs are? The door of Hegira (Migration of Muslims to save their lives from the hands of unbelievers of Quraysh) was already closed on the day your elder brother, Yazid bin Abi Sufyan was taken prisoner and Makkah was surrendered by your father and the process of migration had ceased as soon as your paganism ceased. (The Holy Prophet (s) had said that there would be no Hegira after the victory of Makkah).

Are you so anxious for a battle? Wait! You may get it to your heart's content. I may come out myself to meet you which will be a correct gesture on my part because Allah may have destined me to punish you for your inequities. And if you take the initiative to come out to fight, then it would mean, as a poet of Bani Asad has said “They are facing those furious summer winds which shower sand, rubble and gravel-stones”. Remember that I still hold the sword which has sent your maternal grandfather, maternal uncle and your brother to the same resting-place, the Hell.

By Allah, I know you too well to argue with you or to advise you. Apostasy and avariciousness have taken a firm hold of your mind, your intelligence is of inferior order and you cannot differentiate what in the end is good for you and what is not.

It is correct to say about you that you have risen to such dangerous and sinful heights that your fall which is inevitable will lead to an eternal damnation because you are coveting a thing which morally does not belong to you and for which you are religiously most unsuitable and with which you have neither sincere affection nor any affinity or propensity. It had been once usurped from the right person and you now want to retain it for yourself.

How great is the difference between your words and deeds? How much you resemble your maternal and paternal uncles, whose ill-luck persuaded them to deny and repudiate the Holy Prophet (s) and to fight against him and everyone of whom was at last doomed to die. You know very well that they could not protect themselves or protect the cause they were challenging to men who were energetic and brave and were present in every battlefield to defend the cause of Islam.

You have also written so much about the murderers of Caliph Uthman. The correct thing for you to do is to take the oath of allegiance to me as others have done and present the case in my court of justice and then I shall pass my judgement according to the tenets of the Holy Qur’an. But what you are desiring now is a deceit usually played upon babies when they are to be checked from breast feeding.

May the Peace of Allah be upon those who deserve it.

Letter 65

A letter to Mu’awiya.

There is still time left for you to see the realities which are bright enough to be see and derive the benefit from the knowledge thus gained. But you are following in your ancestors' footsteps in trying to prove falsehood to be true, in seducing people with lies and false hopes, in claiming a thing far above your merits and capacities and in grasping things which religion prohibits to you.

This is so because you want to escape from truth, from religion and from Allah. And you have denied and refused to accept realities which, if you realize, are more important to you than your own flesh and blood. These are the realities about which you have been repeatedly told and often been made to understand.

Now tell me, if you disown truth and religion what will remain with you but plain and evident apostasy and utter reprobation, and if you refuse to accept the truth as told by Allah and the Holy Prophet (s) what you will believe in is but foolish, superstitious and irrational fears. Therefore, do not give away to doubts (about the truth which Islam has proclaimed) and do not be mislead by schism into blind alleys. Beware that sinful temptation has drawn heavy curtains and the darkness they create in blinding you to your reason.

I received your letter. I do not know what to think about it. To me it appears to be an idiotic confusion of irrelevant ideas. Reconciliation, treaty and peace are not the things which you want to offer or to accept. What your letter contains is only disjointed words and meaningless phrases. It has been worded by somebody who has neither knowledge nor reasoning, who can neither offer anything nor invite an offer.

By writing such an idiotic letter you have placed yourself in the position of a man who has been stuck in a sack or one who is groping his way in darkness.

It will be a great misfortune for Muslims if you become their despotic ruler after me, be it the whole Islamic State or any small part of it. May Allah protect them in such a calamity. Allah forbids that I appoint you a governor of any province or willingly allow you to control destinies of Muslims of any part of the State.

Be reasonable and act rationally because if you miss this chance you will find yourself in a very serious situation when faithful Muslims attack you and what can be accepted of you today will not then be acceptable.

Letter 66

A letter to Abdullah bin Abbas. Ibn Abbas said that except the advice and sayings of the Holy Prophet (s) no other advice benefited him more than this.

A variation of this letter has appeared earlier on - see Letter 22.

Sometimes a man feels very happy for getting a thing which was actually destined for him and feels sorry for not getting a thing which he was not destined to get. Therefore, you should not feel happy if your desires are fulfilled and should not feel sorry for deprivations. (Leave everything to the Will of Allah). You should not consider the achievements of the pleasures of life or opportunities of revenge for wrongs done to you as the main blessings bestowed upon you but you must feel happy for good deeds that you have provided for the Hereafter. You must feel sorry for the wealth that you have left without spending it on good causes and the opportunities you have lost of doing noble and pious deeds. Nothing should worry you but the idea of death and the life after death.

Letter 67

A letter to Qutham bin Abbas (brother of Abdullah bin Abbas), who was the Governor of Makkah.

After glorifying Allah and praising the Holy Prophet (s) be it known to you that you should make all the necessary arrangements for the festival of Hajj and remind people of the importance of the Days of Allah (days reserved for special religious functions, for instance, Eid, Hajj, Ramadhan, etc.) and how they are to be observed. Hold meetings and audiences (during these days) in the mornings and evenings. Give proper answers and guidance to those who ask questions about religion and religious observances and functions. Educate those who are ignorant. Hold discussions and exchange views with educated and learned people. None should carry your message to the people but your tongue and let none come between you and those who want to approach you (not even a door-keeper or a guard).

Do not let the deserving and needy people go from you with empty hands, if they come to ask favour of you. Remember that if you once send away a really needy person with a curt refusal, and if you grant the favour on his second approach, you will not get the credit of being sympathetic and generous to him.

Beware of the Public Treasury. Spend its money on the poor people of your province. Find them out (if they do not come to you) and meet their necessities. If any surplus amount is left over after such expenditure then send the amount to the centre so that it may meet the requirements of the poor throughout the State.

Order the citizens of Makkah not to charge rent of the quarters they give to the pilgrims because Allah has decreed that in this Holy City the permanent residents and the pilgrims have equal status and rights. May Allah enable us to do the things which He approves and likes.

Letter 68

Imam Ali (a) wrote this letter to Salman al-Farsi, before his caliphate.

This world is like serpent - so soft to touch yet so lethal in its bite. Therefore, try to avoid those things of this place which please you or allure you because this world will be with you for a very short time and will be of very little use to you. Do not keep your mind fully engrossed in mundane affairs because you know for certain that you will shortly leave this world.

Be most wary and cautious of this vicious world at times when it allures and pleases you the most because it is an old trick of this world that when a man is most happy with pleasure of owning and possessing it, it suddenly deserts him and when a man is most confident of its protection, help and love, it certainly forsakes him.

Letter 69

A letter to Harith Hamdani.

Never forsake the orders, instructions and advice given by the Holy Qur'an. So far as presumptions of actions and things, lawful, legitimate and allowable or unlawful, forbidden and prohibited are concerned, accept the rulings of the Holy Book. Confirm and testify the truth said before (religions of ancient prophets). Take lessons from history for your future because history often repeats itself, and future nations of the world will mostly follow the footsteps of those who have passed. But this whole world is going to end and every individual has to leave it some day or the other. Keeping in mind the Might of Allah, be particularly careful not to swear by Him unless you are taking an oath for a true and lawful affair. Always remember death and the life after death but never wish for death. If you want to face death then do it for a great cause.

Try to avoid all those things which a man may like for himself and may grudge for others. Abstain from an action which you will have to do covertly and secretly and which you feel ashamed to do openly. Refrain from a deed which you will have to accept as evil or bad or for which you will have to tender an apology or excuse.

Do not acquire a bad reputation and do not allow your good reputation to be sullied. Do not mention hearsay things as authenticated facts, such a practice will be sufficient for you to be regarded by others as liar. Do not develop the habit of contradicting and falsifying others on every occasion, it is a disgusting habit.

Have a control on your temper. If you have power to retaliate, then forgive and forget. When in anger, be forbearing, patient and tolerant. When you are in possession of wealth, power and authority, then be forgiving, merciful and compassionate. These traits will help you to gain your salvation.

Be sincerely thankful for all the Blessings which the Merciful Allah has granted you, pray for their continuance, do not misuse them and do not waste them and you must show by your deeds the extent of your obligations to Him for His Blessings.

Remember that among the faithful Muslims the best is he who gives out alms and charities on his on behalf and on behalf of his family and his property. Whatever you spend in this way is something that you send in advance for your life after death. You will then receive the reward of such deeds. And whatever you leave here will be used by others and you will get no benefit out of it.

Avoid the company of men who are weak in their decisions and views, who are superstitious and wicked because people are judged by the company they keep. If possible try to live in large cities because they are the centres of Islamic Culture and Islamic traditions. Avoid places where time is wasted in pastimes and amusements, where there are concentrations of ignorant people and where you find scarcity of companions or lack of society and surroundings to carry on your religious functions.

Keep yourself busy with your work and do not frequent abodes meant for vicious pursuits because they are centres of the activities of Satan and the places which spread vice and wickedness.

Always look to the conditions of people not so well off as you are because observation of their lives and positions will make you more content with your lot in life and more thankful to Allah for it.

Never start on a travel on Fridays without attending Friday prayers unless you are going out for Jihad or there is no alternative for you but to set out.

In all of your affairs keep the thought of Allah in your mind and act according to His Commands and interdictions because obedience to His Orders has priority over every other thing. By various means and in various ways persuade yourself towards prayers but do not be hard with yourself, be gentle and persuasive. When you are free from other duties and you are having good health then spend your free hours in prayers. But the question of offering daily prayers (five times a day) is a different question. They have to be offered compulsorily and in time.

Take care that such a calamity may not overtake you that while you are trying to ignore religion and Allah and are running after a vicious world, death overtakes you.

Avoid the company of wicked people because bad company allures a person towards evil ways. Always keep the Might and Majesty of Allah in view and be a friend of His friends. Be afraid of your own anger because out of the armies of Satan, man's anger is its strongest force.

Letter 70

A letter written to Suhayl bin Hunayf, the Governor of Madina (and brother of Uthman bin Hunayf) about some Madinites who had left him and gone over to Mu'awiya.

The two brothers, Uthman & Suhayl, were favourite companions of Imam Ali (a). Whenever he felt that they had made even a minor error (like attending the dinner of a rich man by Uthman) Imam Ali (a) warned them of the viciousness of such an action.

After glorifying Allah and praising the Holy Prophet (s) be it known to you that I am informed that some Madinites are leaving you covertly and surreptitiously to join the hordes of Mu'awiya. Do not feel sorry for those who have left you and have thus refused you their help and assistance.

Their turning of faces away from Allah and His Guidance and of stealthily walking over to sin and vice is enough proof of their apostasy and schism and enough reason for you to be thankful for good riddance of bad rubbish. These are worldly-minded people. They are drawn towards the vicious world and are running fast after it. They have heard (from the Holy Qur'an, the Holy Prophet (s) and Imam Ali (a)) what equity and justice mean, they have seen a just and equitable rule; they have recognized the implications of these principles and they have fully realized how the use of these principles will bring them in level with the commonest and poorest person of the country and how they will be treated like every other human being. Therefore, they are rushing towards a society where corruption is at premium, where favouritism holds sway and where justice and equity are abhorred.

I swear by Allah that these people are not running away from injustice, inequity, oppression or tyranny, nor are they attaching themselves to truth, justice, equity and fair-play. I pray to Allah to ease the difficulties and remove the obstacles this exodus has created and make our work easy for us.

Letter 71

Imam Ali (a) had entrusted to Munzir bin Jarud Abdi something which he misappropriated.

Thereupon Imam Ali (a) wrote the following letter to him.

The fact is that piety, honesty and righteousness of your father made me misjudge your character. I thought you were a worthy son of a worthy father and were following him in his honesty and righteousness. But all of a sudden I received about you news which confirms the fact that you do not check and control your inordinate desires, that you do not attach any importance to your life after death and you want to adorn and beautify you life at the cost of your salvation and that you are forsaking your religion to provide for your relatives.
If all that is reported to me about you is correct, then the very camel you own or even the strap-shoe is superior to you. You and men of your calibre are not the persons to be confided with the financial affairs of a country or to be assigned to important vacancies of the State or to be entrusted to check and control dishonesty and disloyalty. Therefore, as soon as you receive this letter come back to me.

Letter 72

A letter to Abdullah bin Abbas.

Remember Ibn Abbas that you cannot over live the span of life allotted to you, nor can you ever get that which has not been destined for you. You must know that this world has two aspects; one of its phases is that sometimes it serves you and works in your favour, and the other is that, it acts against you. This world is a place for empires to come and go; it is an abode of constant change. Here anything and everything which has been destined to do you good will reach you though you may not be strong and fit enough to try for it, and the loss, if it has been decreed for you, will come to you however hard you may try to avoid it.

Letter 73

A letter to Mu’awiya.

I have become sick of reading your letters and of replying to them. I feel that I have made an error in giving them undue importance and taking them seriously. You are always unreasonable and often irrational. Your sole desire is to make me accept your demand (for allowing your oppressive, tyrannical and apostatic sway over a big province) and for this you have carried on an unending series of correspondence. Your condition is like that of a man who wants to live in a land of happy dreams and does not want to face facts or like the one who is confused and who does not know what to do and where to go and who is unaware of what the future (life after death) has in store for him. I know that you are not a fool but you resemble foolish and unreasonable people.

I swear by Allah that had I not been disinclined to bring harm to you I would have taken the initiative and would have punished you very severely. Beware that Satan has made you incorrigible, it has made you blind to good things as shown by the Holy Prophet (s) and deaf to his teachings.

May the Peace of Allah be upon those who deserve it.

Letter 74

A treaty which Imam Ali (a) has worded for Bani Rabi'a tribe and the Yemenites to agree upon.

Husham bin Sa'ib Kalbi has quoted this treaty.

This is the treaty which has been agreed upon by the Yemenite people, be they urban or rural and pastoral and the people of the Bani Rabi'a tribe, be they dwellers of cities or those living in villages or desert. Through this treaty both the parties have agreed that they will steadfastly adhere to their faith in the Holy Book, will accept its orders and tenets, will invite people towards it and will pass verdicts according to its teachings and rulings that they will accept the call of those who invite them towards this Book and will accept the judgement passed according to it that they will not accept anything in lieu of this Book and will not sell it at any cost, that they will forsake those who forsake this Book and that they will unite to fight against those who go against this Book.
They promise to help each other and to speak with a common voice on affairs of mutual interest. They will not break this agreement on account of excitement or anger of any person or because one participant considers the other humble, weak or powerless, or because one group speaks disparagingly of the other.
Every member of the covenanting party whether present or absent, whether educated or illiterate, wise or ignorant, will stand by this agreement faithfully.
Over and above the terms of this covenant is the promise of its observance which they have made to Allah and for which they will be held responsible.

Letter 75

After the Muslims took oath of allegiance to Imam Ali (a), he wrote the following letter to Mu’awiya.

Waqidi has quoted this letter in his book, al-Jamal.

After glorifying Allah and praising the Holy Prophet (s) be it known to you that you very well know my attitude towards your tribe, why in the beginning I fought against you all in the defense of Islam and how and why later on I kept myself aloof from you and from your activities; I had no concern about your tribe till there took place the incident which could not be prevented. It is a long story and much has been said and is being said about it. However, that was to be. Now you take the oath of allegiance to me from the people of your province and come on deputation to me.

Letter 76

When Imam Ali (a) sent Ibn Abbas as his representative to Basra, he gave him the following instructions.

Treat people kindly, receive them in audience, do not be very harsh in issuing and enforcing orders, do not lose temper because this weakness is always a good opening for Satan to find its way into your mind. Always keep this in mind that the thing which takes you nearer to Allah will carry you away from Hell and the thing which drives you away from Allah will drive you towards Hell.

Letter 77

When Imam Ali (a) sent Ibn Abbas for discussions with the Kharijites, he, peace be upon him, gave him the following instructions.

While arguing, never quote statements from the Holy Qur'an because the passages of this Book require very careful consideration as they could be paraphrased in various ways and their meanings could be construed differently. Thus, you will adhere to your explanation and they will stick to their elucidation. Therefore, argue with them in the light of the traditions of the Holy Prophet (s) and then they will find no way to misrepresent truth.

Letter 78

Abu Musa Ash'ari (Abdullah bin Qays) wrote a letter to Imam Ali (a) from the place where decision of the arbitration took place.

Imam Ali (a) wrote to him the following letter in reply. Sayyid bin Yahya Amawi has quoted this letter in his book Al-Maghazi.

Verily there are many people in this world who have forsaken their salvation and in its place they have accepted the pomp and pleasure of worldly life. They are being driven by their unruly and inordinate desires and they work and speak on behalf of these desires only.

This affair has placed me in an awkward position. The people, who have united against me are those who want everything out of this vicious and wicked world for themselves and for their pleasures. They have drawn their swords against me. I am trying to undo the harm they have done but I am afraid lest the problem should become very serious and unresolvable.

You know very well that no one is more desirous of the Unity of Muslims than I and the only thing which I want to achieve by this unity is the Blessings of Allah and my salvation. I shall do what I have resolved to do even though you change the good opinion which you had about me when we last parted. Surely, unfortunate is he who possesses wisdom and acquires experience and yet does not care to make use of either.

I cannot tolerate lies and I cannot bear to see people undoing the good done by Allah through Islam.

Therefore you should give up forming opinion about things which you have not clearly understood or visualized because many people will try their best to influence you with their insinuations.

Letter 79

This is the order issued by Imam Ali (a) to his generals when he took over rulership of the Muslim State.

Verily, previous rulers have come to sad ends because they prevented people from getting their just rights, they got corrupted and could be purchased, when they were tempted by sins and vices, they were lead astray and they followed the wicked lead.

SAYINGS

1. During civil disturbance adopt such an attitude that people do not attach any importance to you - they neither burden you with complicated affairs, nor try to derive any advantage out of you.

2. He who is greedy is disgraced; he who discloses his hardship will always be humiliated; he who has no control over his tongue will often have to face discomfort.

3. Avarice is disgrace; cowardice is a defect; poverty often disables an intelligent man from arguing his case; a poor man is a stranger in his own town; misfortune and helplessness are calamities; patience is a kind of bravery; to sever attachments with the wicked world is the greatest wealth; piety is the best weapon of defence.

4. Submission to Allah's Will is the best companion; wisdom is the noblest heritage; theoretical and practical knowledge are the best signs of distinction; deep thinking will present the clearest picture of every problem.

5. The mind of a wise man is the safest custody of secrets; cheerfulness is the key to friendship; patience and forbearance will conceal many defects.

6. A conceited and self-admiring person is disliked by others; charity and alms are the best remedy for ailments and calamities; one has to account in the next world for the deeds that he has done in this world.

7. Man is a wonderful creature; he sees through the layers of fat (eyes), hears through a bone (ears) and speaks through a lump of flesh (tongue).

8. When this world favors somebody, it lends him the attributes, and surpassing merits of others and when it turns its face away from him it snatches away even his own excellences and fame.

9. Live amongst people in such a manner that if you die they weep over you and if you are alive they crave for your company.

10. If you overpower your enemy, then pardon him by way of thankfulness to Allah, for being able to subdue him.

11. Unfortunate is he who cannot gain a few sincere friends during his life and more unfortunate is the one who has gained them and then lost them (through his deeds).

12. When some blessings come to you, do not drive them away through thanklessness.

13. He who is deserted by friends and relatives will often find help and sympathy from strangers.

14. Every person who is tempted to go astray, does not deserve punishment.

15. Our affairs are attached to the destiny decreed by Allah, even our best plans may lead us to destruction.

16. There is a tradition of the Holy Prophet "With the help of hair-dye turn old age into youth so that you do not resemble the Jews". When Imam Ali was asked to comment on this tradition, he said that in the early stage of Islam there were very few Muslims. The Holy Prophet advised them to look young and energetic and not

to adopt the fashion of the Jews (priest) having long, white flowing beards. But the Muslims were not in minority then, theirs was a strong and powerful State, they could take up any style they liked.

17. For those who refused to side with any party, Imam Ali or his enemies, Imam Ali said: They have forsaken religion and are of no use to infidelity also.

18. One who rushes madly after inordinate desire, runs the risk of encountering destruction and death.

19. Overlook and forgive the weaknesses of the generous people because if they fall down, Allah will help them.

20. Failures are often the results of timidity and fears; disappointments are the results of bashfulness; hours of leisure pass away like summer-clouds, therefore, do not waste opportunity of doing good.

21. If the right usurped from us is given back to us we shall take it, otherwise we shall go on claiming it.

22. If someone's deeds lower his position, his pedigree cannot elevate it.

23. To render relief to the distressed and to help the oppressed make amends for great sins.

24. O son of Adam, when you see that your Lord, the Glorified, bestows His Favors on you while you disobey Him, you should fear Him (take warning that His Wrath may not turn those very blessings into misfortunes).

25. Often your utterances and expressions of your face leak out the secrets of your hidden thoughts.

26. When you get ill do not get nervous about it and try as much as possible to be hopeful.

27. The best form of devotion to the service of Allah is not to make a show of it.

28. When you have to depart from this world and have to meet death (eventually), then why wish delay (why feel nervous about death).

29. Take warning ! He has not exposed so many of your sinful activities that it appears as if He has forgiven you (it may be that He has given you time to repent).

30. When Imam Ali was asked about Faith in Religion, he replied that the structure of faith is supported by four pillars endurance, conviction, justice and jihad.
    Endurance is composed of four attributes: eagerness, fear, piety and anticipation (of death). so whoever is eager for Paradise will ignore temptations; whoever fears the fire of Hell will abstain from sins; whoever practices piety will easily bear the difficulties of life and whoever anticipates death will hasten towards good deeds.
    Conviction has also four aspects to guard oneself against infatuations of sin; to search for explanation of truth through knowledge; to gain lessons from instructive things and to follow the precedent of the past people, because whoever wants to guard himself against vices and sins will have to search for the true causes of infatuation and the true ways of combating them out and to find those true ways one has to search them with the help of knowledge, whoever gets fully acquainted with various branches of knowledge will take lessons from life and whoever tries to take lessons from life is actually engaged in the study of the causes of rise and fall of previous civilizations .
    Justice also has four aspects depth of understanding, profoundness of knowledge, fairness of judgment and dearness of mind; because whoever tries his best to under- stand a problem will have to study it, whoever has the practice of studying the subject he is to deal with, will develop a clear mind and will always come to correct decisions, whoever tries to achieve all this will have to develop ample patience and forbearance and whoever does this has done justice to the cause of religion and has led a life of good repute and fame.
    Jihad is divided into four branches: to persuade people to be obedient to Allah; to prohibit them from sin and vice; to struggle (in the cause of Allah) sincerely and firmly on all occasions and to detest the vicious. Whoever persuades people to obey the orders of Allah provides strength to the believers; whoever dissuades them from vices and sins humiliates the unbelievers; whoever struggles on all occasions discharges all his obligations and whoever detests the vicious only for the sake of Allah, then Allah will take revenge on his enemies and will be pleased with Him on the Day of Judgment.

31. There are four causes of infidelity and loss of belief in Allah: hankering after whims, a passion to dispute every argument, deviation from truth; and dissension, because whoever hankers after whims does not incline towards truth; whoever keeps on disputing every argument on account of his ignorance, will always remain blind to truth, whoever deviates from truth because of ignorance, will always take good for evil and evil for good and he will always remain intoxicated with misguidance. And whoever makes a breach (with Allah and His Messenger) his path becomes difficult, his affairs will become complicated and his way to salvation will be uncertain.
    Similarly, doubt has also four aspects absurd reason- ing; fear; vacillation and hesitation; and unreasonable surrender to infidelity, because one who has accustomed himself to unreasonable and absurd discussions will never see the Light of Truth and will always live in the darkness of ignorance. One who is afraid to face facts (of life, death and the life after death) will always turn away from ultimate reality, one who allows doubts and uncertainties to vacillate him will always be under the control of Satan and one who surrenders himself to infidelity accepts damnation in both the worlds.

32. A virtuous person is better then virtue and a vicious person is worse than vice.

33. Be generous but not extravagant, be frugal but not miserly.

34. The best kind of wealth is to give up inordinate desires.

35. One who says unpleasant things about others, will himself quickly become a target of their scandal.

36. One who hopes inordinately, impairs his deeds.

37. When Imam Ali, marching at the head of his army towards Syria, reached Ambar, the landlords of the place came out to meet him in zeal of their love, faithfulness and respect, no sooner had they seen Imam Ali they got down from their horses and started running in front of him. Imam Ali asked the reason of their strange actions. They replied that it was their custom to show their love and respect in that way. Imam Ali replied: "By Allah, by your action you do no good whatsoever to your rulers but you tire yourself and put yourself in toils in this world and in trouble in the next. How unfortunate is that exertion, which brings harm here and in the Hereafter and how useful is that ease which keeps you in comfort in this world and away from the Hell in the next.

38. Imam Ali once said to his son Imam Hasan, My son, learn four things from me and through them you will learn four more. If you keep them in mind your actions will not bring any harm to you: The greatest wealth is Wisdom; the greatest poverty is stupidity; the worst unso- ciableness is that of vanity and self-glorification; and the best nobility of descent exhibits itself in politeness and in refinement of manner. The next four things, my son, are: "Do not make friendship with a fool because when he will try to do you good he will do you harm; do not make a miser your friend because he will run away from you at the time of your dire need; do not be friendly with a vicious and wicked person because he will sell you and your friendship at the cheapest price and do not make friend of a liar because like a mirage he will make you visualize very near the things which lie at a great distance and will make you see at the great distance the things which are near to you".

39. Recommended prayers cannot attain the pleasures of Allah for you when obligatory prayers are left unattended.

40. A wise man first thinks and then speaks and a fool speaks first and then thinks.

41. A fool's mind is at the mercy of his tongue and a wise man's tongue is under the control of his mind.

42. One of the companions of Imam fell ill. Imam Ali called upon him and thus advised him: "Be thankful to Allah. He has made this illness a thing to atone your sins because a disease in itself has nothing to bring reward to anyone, it merely expiates one's sins and so far as reward is concerned, one has to earn it with his good words and good deeds. The Almighty Lord grants Paradise to his creatures on account of their piety and noble thoughts".

43. May Allah Bless Kabbab bin Aratt. He embraced Islam of his own freewill and immigrated (from Makkah) cheerfully. He lived a contented life. He bowed happily before the Will of Allah and he led the life of a mujahid.

44. Blessed is the man who always kept the life after death in his view, who remembered the Day of Judgment through all his deeds, who led a contented life and who was happy with the lot that Allah had destined for him.

45. If I cut a faithful Muslim into pieces to make him hate me, he will not turn into my enemy and if I give all the wealth of this world to a hypocrite to make him my friend he will not befriend me. It is so because the Holy Prophet has said: " O Ali! No faithful Muslim will ever be your enemy and no hypocrite will ever be your friend. "

46. The sin which makes you sad and repentant is more liked by Allah than the good deed which turns you arrogant.

47. Value of a man depends upon his courage; his veracity depends upon his self-respect and his chastity depends upon his sense of honor.

48. Success is the result of foresight and resolution, foresight depends upon deep thinking and planning and the most important factor of planning is to keep your secrets to yourself.

49. Be afraid of a gentleman when he is hungry, and of a mean person when his stomach is full.

50. Hearts of people are like wild beasts. They attach themselves to those who love and train them.

51. So long as fortune is favouring you, your defects will remain covered.

52. Only he who has the power to punish can pardon.

53. Generosity is to help a deserving person without his request, and if you help him after his request, then it is either out of self-respect or to avoid rebuke.

54. There is no greater wealth than wisdom, no greater poverty than ignorance; no greater heritage than culture and no greater support than consultation.

55. Patience is of two kinds: patience over what pains you, and patience against what you covet.

56. Wealth converts a strange land into homeland and poverty turns a native place into a strange land.

57. Contentment is the capital which will never diminish.

58. Wealth is the fountain head of passions.

59. Whoever warns you against sins and vices is like the one who gives you good tidings.

60. Tongue is a beast, if it is let loose, it devours.

61. Woman is a scorpion whose grip is sweet.

62. If you are greeted then return the greetings more warmly. If you are favoured, then repay the obligation manifold; but he who takes the initiative will always excel in merit.

63. The source of success of a claimant is the mediator.

64. People in this world are like travelers whose journey is going on though they are asleep. (Life's journey is going on though men may not feel it).

65. Lack of friends means, stranger in one's own country.

66. Not to have a thing is less humiliating than to beg it.

67. Do not feel ashamed if the amount of charity is small because to refuse the needy is an act of greater shame.

68. To refrain from unlawful and impious source of pleasures is an ornament to the poor and to be thankful for the riches granted is the adornment of wealth.

69. If you cannot get things as much as you desire than be contented with what you have.

70. An ignorant person will always overdo a thing or neglect it totally.

71. The wiser a man is, the less talkative will he be.

72. Time wears out bodies, renews hopes, brings death nearer and takes away aspirations. Whoever gets anything from the world lives in anxiety for holding it and whoever loses anything passes his days grieving over the loss.

73. Whoever wants to be a leader should educate himself before educating others. Before preaching to others he should first practice himself. Whoever educates himself and improves his own morals is superior to the man who tries to teach and train others.

74. Every breath you take is a step towards death.

75. Anything which can be counted is finite and will come to an end.

76. If matters get mixed up then scrutinize the cause and you will know what the effects will be.

77. Zirar bin Zamra Zibabi, known as Zirar Suda'i, was a companion of Imam Ali. When, after the martyrdom of Imam Ali, he went to Damascus, Muawiya called him and asked him to say something about Imam Ali. Zirar, knowing that Muawiya hated Imam Ali intensely tried to avoid this topic, but Muawiya forced him to speak. Thereupon, Zirar said: "O Amir, I had often seen Imam Ali in the depth of nights, when people were either sleeping or engrossed in amusements, he would be standing in the niche of the Masjid, with tears in his eyes and he would beseech Allah to help him maintain a pious, a virtuous and a noble character and to forsake the world. He would then address the world, saying 'O vicious world! Be away from me, why do you come in front of me like this ? Do you want to allure me ? Allah forbid that I should be allured and tempted by you and your pleasures. It is not possible. Go and try your allurements on somebody else. I do not desire to own you and do not want to have you. I have forsaken you thrice. It is like divorcing a woman thrice after which act she cannot be taken back as a wife. The life of pleasures that you offer is of a very little duration. There is no real importance in what you offer, the desire of holding you is an insult and a humiliation to sober minds. Sad is the plight of those who want to acquire you. They do not provide for the Hereafter. They have to pass through a long journey over a very difficult road towards a sat destination'. Zirar says that when he stopped, there were tears in the eyes of Muawiya who said, 'May peace of Allah be upon Abul Hasan Ali bin Abi Talib, he was undoubtedly like that. Now tell me, Zirar! How do you feel his separa- tion?' Zirar replied, "My sorrow and grief is like that of woman whose only child has been murdered in her lap". With this remark Zirar walked out of the court of Muawiya and left the city.

78. After the Battle of Siffin, somebody asked Imam Ali whether they had been destined to fight against the Syrians. Imam Ali replied if by destiny you mean a compulsion (physical or otherwise) through which we are forced (by nature) to do a thing then it is not so. Had it been an obligation of that kind there would have been no question of reward for doing it and punishment for not doing it (when you are physically forced to do a thing, like breathing, sleeping, eating, drinking etc. then there can be no reward for doing it and no retribution for not doing it. In such cases nature forces you to do a thing and you cannot but do it), then the promised blessings and punishments in life after death will have no meaning. The Merciful Lord has given his creatures (human beings) complete freedom to do as they like, and then prohibited them from certain actions and warned them of the consequences of such actions (His Wrath and His Punishments). These orders of Allah carry in them the least trouble and lead us towards the most convenient ways of life and the rewards which He has promised for good deeds are many times more than the actions actually deserve. He sees people disobeying Him and tolerates them not because He can be overruled or be compelled to accept human supremacy over Him. He did not send His prophets to amuse Himself or provide amuse- ment for

them. He did not reveal His orders without any genuine reason nor has He created the galaxies and the earth without any purpose. The Universe without plan, purpose and program is the idea of infidels and the pagans, sorry will be their plight in the leaping fires of Hell. Hearing this the man asked Imam Ali, "Then what kind of destiny was it that we had?" Imam Ali replied: "It was an order of Allah to do it like the order He has given in His Holy Book: You are destined by Allah to worship none but Him, here 'destined' means 'ordered' it does not mean physical compulsion".

79. Acquire wisdom and truth from whomever you can because even an apostate can have them but unless they are passed over to a faithful Muslim and become part of wisdom and truth that he possesses, they have a confused existence in the minds of apostates.

80. Knowledge and wisdom are really the privilege of a faithful Muslim. If you have lost them, get them back even though you may have to get them from the apostates.

81. Value of each man depends upon the art and skill which he has attained.

82. I want to teach you five of those things which deserve your greatest anxiety to acquire them: Have hope only in Allah. Be afraid of nothing but sins. If you do not know a thing never feel ashamed to admit ignorance. If you do not know a thing never hesitate or feel ashamed to learn it. Acquire patience and endurance because their relation with true faith is that of a head to a body, a body is of no use without a head, similarly true faith can be of no use without attributes of resignation, endurance and patience.

83. A man hypocritically started praising Imam Ali, though he had no faith in him and Imam Ali hearing these praises from him said "I am less than what you tell about me but more than what you think about me".

84. Those who have come alive out of a blood-bath live longer and have more children.

85. One who imagines himself to be all-knowing will surely suffer on account of his ignorance.

86. I appreciate an old man's cautious opinion more than the valor of a young man.

87. I wonder at a man who loses hope of salvation when the door of repentance is open for him.

88. Imam Muhammad Baqir says that Imam Ali once said: "There were two things in this world which softened the Wrath of Allah and prevented its descent upon man: One has been taken away from you; hold the other stead- fastly. The one which has been taken away from men is the Holy Prophet and the one which is still left with them and which they must hold steadfastly is repentance and atonement for sins because Allah at one place in the Holy Book addressed the Holy Prophet and said Allah would not punish them while you were among them nor while they were asking for forgiveness. (Surah Anfal, 8 : 33)

89. Whoever keeps in order his affairs with Allah (follows His orders sincerely), Allah will also put his affairs with men in order. Whoever makes arrangement for his salvation, Allah will arrange his worldly affairs; whoever is a preacher for himself, Allah will also protect him.

90. He is the wisest and the most knowing man who advises people not to lose hope and faith in the Mercy of Allah and not to be too sure and over-confident of immunity from His Wrath and Punishment.

91. Like your body your mind also gets tired so refresh it by wise sayings.

92. That knowledge which remains only on your tongue is very superficial. The intrinsic value of knowledge is that you act upon it.

93. Take care and do not pray to the Lord, saying, "Lord! I pray to You to protect and guard me from temptations and trials", for there is none who is not tempted and tried. But beseech Him to guard you against such temptation as may lead you towards wickedness and sins because Allah says in His Holy Book, Know that your wealth and children are temptations. (Surah al-Anfal, 8: 28) it means Allah tried people through wealth and children so that it may be tested as to who is content with what he gets honestly and who is thankful to Allah for the position he is placed in with regard to his children. Though Allah knows them better than even they know themselves, yet those trials and tests are for the purpose of their realizing and

knowing those deeds which merit reward or which deserve punishment. There are some people who love to have male children and hate daughters and there are some who simply crave for wealth and hate poverty.

94. Imam Ali was asked the meaning of being well-off or well-provided for. Imam Ali replied, "Your welfare does not lie in your having enormous wealth and numerous children but it rests in your being highly educated and forbearing and in your being proud of your obedience to Allah. If you do a good deed then thank Allah for it and if you commit a sin then repent and atone for it. In this world there is a real welfare for two kinds of people, one is the person who, when commits a sin, atones for it and the other is anxious to do good as much as possible.

95. Importance of the deeds that you have done with fear of Allah cannot be minimized and how can the deeds which are acceptable to Allah be considered unimportant.

96. "Nearest to the prophets are those persons who have to those prophets and obey them". Saying this, Imam Ali cited a passage from the Holy Qur'an 'Best liked by Abraham and nearest to him were the people who obeyed him'. He further said, "That the present times are the times of our Holy Prophet and his faithful followers. The best friend of our Holy Prophet is he who, though not related to him, obeys the orders of Allah and his greatest enemy is the man who though related to him, disobeys Allah '.

97. Imam Ali was told of a Kharijite that he got up in the night to pray and recite the Holy Book. Imam Ali said, "To sleep with having sincere faith in religion and Allah is better than to pray with wavering faith".

98. Whenever a tradition of the Holy Prophet is related to you, scrutinize it, do not be satisfied with mere verbatim repetition of the same because there are many people who repeat the words containing knowledge but only few ponder over them and try to fully grasp the meaning they convey.

99. Imam Ali heard somebody reciting the passage of the Holy Qur'an we belong to Allah and our return is towards Him, Imam Ali said, "How true it is ! Our declaring that we belong to Allah indicates that we accept Him as our Master, Owner and Lord. And when we say that our return is towards Allah indicates that we accept our mortality".

100. Some people praised Imam Ali on his face. He replied, "Allah knows me very well and I also know myself more than you. Please, Lord ! make me better than what they imagine me to be and please excuse those Weaknesses of mine which they are not aware of".

101. To secure for you fame, credit as well as blessings, the help that you give to men in need, should possess the following attributes: whatever its extent, it should be considered by you as trifling so that it may be granted a high status; it should be given secretly, Allah will manifest it; and it must be given immediately so that it becomes pleasant.

102. Your society will pass through a period when cunning and crafty intriguers will be favoured by status, when profligates will be considered as well-bred, well-behaved and elegant elites of the society, when just and honest persons will be considered as weaklings, when charity will be considered as a loss to wealth and property, when support and help to each other will be considered as favour and benevolence and when prayers and worship to Allah will be taken up for the sake of show to gain popularity and higher status, at such times regimes will be run under the advice of women and the youngsters will be the rulers and counselors of the State.

103. Imam Ali's garment was very old with patches on it. When somebody drew his attention towards it, he replied, " Such dresses, when worn by men of status make them submissive to Allah and kind-hearted towards others and the faithful Muslims can conveniently follow the example ". Vicious pleasures of this world and salvation are like two enemies or two roads running in opposite directions or towards opposite poles, one to the North and the other to the South. Whoever likes to gain the pleasures and pomps of this world will hate austerity in life which is necessary to gain salvation. Reverse will be the attitude of a man desirous of achieving Eternal Bliss. One has to adopt either of the two ways of life, and as they both cannot be brought together, a man has to choose one of them.

104. Nawf bin Fizala Bakali, the famous scholar of the early Islamic days says that one night he was with Imam Ali. In the middle of the night, Imam Ali got up from his bed, looked for sometime at the stars and inquired of

Nawf whether he was awake. Nawf said: "I got from my bed replying, "Yes, Amirul Mo'minin (Commander of the Faithful) ! I am awake".
Imam Ali said Nawf ! Those are the fortunate people who adopt piety as the principle of their lives and are fully attentive to their welfare for the Hereafter. They accept bare earth as the most comfortable bed and water as the most pleasant drink. They adopt the Holy Qur'an and prayers as their guide and protector and like Prophet Jesus Christ (Isa) they forsake the world and its vicious pleasure.
Nawf ! Prophet David (Daud) once got up at such an hour in the night and said this was the hour when prayers of everyone who prayed were accepted except of those who forcibly collected revenues or who were scandal- mongers or were persons in the police force of a despotic regime or were musicians".

105. 105, Those who give up religion to better their lot in life seldom succeed. The Wrath of Allah makes them go through more calamities and losses than the gains they gather for themselves.

106. There are many educated people who have ruined their future on account of their ignorance of religion. Their knowledge did not prove of any avail to them.

107. More wonderful than man himself is that part of his body which is connected with his trunk with muscles. It is his brain (mind). Look what good and bad tendencies arise from it. On the one hand it holds treasures of know- ledge and wisdom and on the other it is found to harbour very ugly desires. If a man sees even a tiny gleam of success, then greed forces him to humiliate himself. If he gives way to avarice, then inordinate desires ruin him, if he is disappointed, then despondency almost kills him. If he is excited, then he loses temper and gets angry. If he is pleased, then he gives up precaution. Sudden fear makes him dull and nervous, and he is unable to think and find a way out of the situation. During the times of peace and prosperity he becomes careless and unmindful of the future. If he acquires wealth, then he becomes haughty and arrogant. If he is plunged in distress, then his agitation, impatience and nervousness disgrace him. If he is overtaken by poverty, then he finds himself in a very sad plight, hunger makes him weak, and over-feeding harms him equally. In short every kind of loss and gain makes his mind unbalanced.

108. We, Ahlul Bayt (chosen descendants of the Holy Prophet), hold such central and balancing position in religion that those who are deficient in understanding and acting upon its principles, will have to come to us for reformation, and those who are overdoing it have got to learn moderation from us.

109. A Divine rule can be established only by a man, who, where justice and equity are required, neither feels deficient nor weak and who is not greedy and avaricious.

110. Sohayl bin Hunayf Ansari was a favourite companion of Imam Ali. At the time of Imam Ali's return from Siffin, he died at Kufa of the wounds sustained in the battle. His death left Imam Ali very sad and he said: "Even if a mountain loves me it will be crushed into bits". (it means people are tested with my love, and to prove it they have to pass through loss and calamities).

111. Anyone who loves us Ahlul Bayt must be ready to face a life of austerity.

112. No wealth is more useful than intelligence and wisdom; no solitude is more horrible than when people avoid you on account of your vanity and conceit or when you wrongly consider yourself above everybody to confide and consult; no eminence is more exalting than piety; no companion can prove more useful than politeness; no heritage is better than culture; no leader is superior to Divine Guidance; no deal is more profitable than good deeds; no profit is greater than Divine Reward; no abstinence is better than to restrain one's mind from doubts (about religion); no virtue is better than refraining from prohibited deeds; no knowledge is superior to deep thinking and prudence; no worship or prayers are more sacred than fulfillment of obligations and duties, no religious faith is loftier than feeling ashamed of doing wrong and bearing calamities patiently; no eminence is greater than to adopt humbleness; no exaltation is superior to knowledge; nothing is more respectable than forgiveness and forbear- ance; no support and defense are stronger than consultation.

113. When a community is composed of honest, sober and virtuous people, your forming a bad opinion about anyone of its members, when nothing wicked has been seen of him, is a great injustice to him. On the contrary in a corrupt society to form good opinion of anyone of them and to trust him is to harm yourself.

114. When somebody asked Imam Ali as to how he was getting on, he replied: "What do you want to know about a person whose life is leading him towards ultimate death, whose health is the first stage towards illness and whom society has forced out of his retreat".

115. There are many persons whom constant grants of His Bounties turn them wicked and fit for His punishment and there are many more who have become vain and self- deceptive because the Merciful Allah has not exposed their weaknesses and vices to the world and the people speak highly about them. All this is an opportunity. No trial of the Lord is more severe than the time He allows (in which either you may repent or get deeper into vices).

116. Two kinds of people will be damned on my account Those who form exaggerated opinion about me and those who under-estimate me because they hate me.

117. To lose or to waste an opportunity will result in grief and sorrow.

118. She world is like a serpent, so soft to touch, but so full of lethal poison. Unwise people are allured by it and drawn towards it, and wise men avoid it and keep away from its poisonous effects.

119. When asked about Quraysh, Imam Ali replied that amongst them Bani Mukhzum are like sweet scented flower of Quraysh; their men are good to talk to and their women prove very good wives; Bani Abdush Shams are very intelligent and very prudent but we (of Bani Hashim) are very generous and very brave to face death. Bani Abdush Shams are more in numbers, ugly and intriguers but Bani Hashim are beautiful, good speakers and orators and very faithful as friends.

120. What a difference is there between a deed whose pleasure passes away leaving behind it the pangs of pain and punishment and the deed whose oppressive harshness comes to an end leaving behind Divine rewards !

121. Imam Ali was following a funeral and as it was passing along a road, somebody laughed loudly (a sign of discourtesy and lack of manner). Hearing this laugh, Imam Ali remarked, " Some of us feel that death is meant for everybody except themselves or it is destined to others and not to themselves or those whom we see dying around us are only travelers going on a journey and will come back to us. It is a sad sight to see that in one moment we commit them to earth and in the next we take hold of the things left by them as if we are going to remain permanently in this world after them. The fact is that we forget sensible advice given to us and become victim of every calamity.

122. Blessings are for the man who humbles himself before Allah, whose sources of income are honest, whose inten- tions are always honorable, whose character is noble, whose habits are sober, who gives away in the cause and in the Name of Allah, the wealth which is lying surplus with him, who controls his tongue from vicious and useless talk, who abstains from oppression, who faithfully follows the traditions of the Holy Prophet and who keeps himself away from innovation in religion.

123. Jealousy in woman is unpardonable but in man it is a sign of his faith in religion (because Islam has permitted polygamy and prohibited polyandry).

124. I define Islam for you in a way that nobody dared do it before me. Islam means obedience to Allah, obedience to Allah means having sincere faith in Him, such a faith means to believe in His Power, belief in His Power means recognizing and accepting His Majesty, acceptance of His Majesty means fulfilling the obligations laid down by Him and fulfillment of obligations means actions (Therefore, Islam does not mean mere faith, but faith plus deeds).

125. I wonder at the mentality of a miser, fearing poverty he takes to stinginess and thus hastily pushes himself head- long into a state of want and destitution, he madly desires plenty and ease, but throws it away without understand- ing. In this world he, of his own free will, leads the life of a a beggar and in the next world he will have to submit an account like the rich.
I wonder at the arrogance of a haughty and vain person. Yesterday he was only a drop of semen and tomorrow he will turn into a corpse. I wonder at the man who observes the Universe created by Allah and doubts His Being and Existence. I wonder at the man who sees people dying around him and yet he has forgotten his end. I wonder at the man who understands the marvel of genesis of creation and refuses to

accept that he will be brought back to life again. I wonder at the man who takes great pains to decorate and to make comfortable this mortal habitat and totally forgets his permanent abode.

126. Whoever is not diligent in his work, will suffer; who- ever has no share of Allah in his wealth and in his life then there is no place for him in His Realm.

127. Be very cautious of cold in the beginning of winter and welcome it at the close of the season because cold season effects your bodies exactly as it effects the trees; in the early season its severity makes them shrivel and shed their leaves and at the end it helps them to revive.

128. If you understand Allah's Majesty, then you will not attach any importance to the creatures.

129. While returning from Siffin, Imam Ali passed along the cemetery of Kufa. Addressing the graves he said: "O you, who are lying in horrible and deserted houses. O you, who are shut up in the dark graves, who are alone in their abodes, strangers to the places assigned to them; you have gone ahead and preceded us, while we are also following your steps and shall shortly join you. Do you know what has happened aver you? Your houses and property was taken up by others, your widows have remarried, this is what we can tell you of this world. Can you give us some news about things around you?" Saying this, Imam Ali turned to his companions and said, "If they are permitted to speak they will inform you that the best provision for the next world is piety and virtue".

130. Imam Ali heard someone abusing and blaming the world and said to him, "O you, who are blaming the world, who have been allured and enticed by it, and have been tempted by its false pretenses. You allowed yourself to be enamored of, to be captivated by it and then you accuse and blame it. Have you any reason or right to accuse it and to call it a sinner and seducer? Or is the world not justified in calling you a wicked knave and a sinning hypocrite? When did it make you lose your intelli- gence and reasoning? And how did it cheat you or snake false pretenses to you? Did it conceal from you the fact of the ultimate end of everything that it holds, the fact of the sway of death, decay and destruction in its domain? Did it keep you in the dark about the fate of your fore- fathers and their final abode under the earth? Did it keep the resting-place of your mothers a secret from you? Do you not know that they have returned to dust? Many a time you must have attended the sick persons and many of them you must have seen beyond the scope of medicine. Neither the science of healing nor could your nursing and attendance nor your prayers and weeping prolonged the span of their lives, and they died. You were anxious for them, you procured the best medical aid, you gathered famous physicians and provided best - medicines for them. Death could not be held back and life could not be pro- longed. In this drama and in this tragedy did the world not present you with a lesson and a moral?
Certainly, this world is a house of truth for those who look into it carefully, an abode of peace and rest for those who understand its ways and moods and it is the best working ground for those who want to procure rewards for life in the Hereafter. It is a place of acquiring knowledge and wisdom for those who want to acquire them, a place of worship for the friends of Allah and for Angels. It is the place where prophets received revelations of Allah. It is the place for virtuous people and saints to do good deeds and to be assigned with rewards for the same. Only in this world they could trade with Allah's Favors and Blessings and only while living here they could barter their good deeds with His Blessings and Rewards. Where else could all this be done? Who are you to abuse the world when it has openly declared its mortality and mortality of everything connected with it, when it has given everyone of its inha- bitants to understand that all of them are to face death, when through its ways it has given them all an idea of calamities they have to face here, and through the sight of its temporary and fading pleasures it has given them glimpses of eternal pleasures of Paradise and suggested them to wish and work for the same. If you study it properly you will find that simply to warn and frighten you of the consequences of evil deeds and to persuade you towards good actions, every night it raises new hopes of peace and prosperity in you and every morning it places new anxieties and new worries before you. Those who passed such lives are ashamed of and repent the time so passed abuse this world. But there are people who will praise this world on the Day of Judgment that it reminded them of the Hereafter and they took advantage of these reminders. It informed them of the effects of good deeds and they made correct use of the information it advised them and they were benefited by its advice".

131. An Angel announces daily: "Birth of more human beings means so many more will die, collection of more wealth means of much more will be destroyed, erection of more buildings means so many more ruins will come".

132. This world is not a permanent place, it is a passage, a road on which you are passing. There are two kinds of people here: One is the kind of those who have sold their souls for eternal damnation, the other is of those who have purchased their souls and freed them from damnation.

133. A friend cannot be considered a friend unless he is tested on three occasions: in time of need, behind your back and after your death.

134. Anyone who has been granted four attributes will not be deprived of their (four) effects; one who prays to Allah and implores to Him will not be deprived of granting of his prayers; one who repents for his thoughts and deeds will not be refused acceptance of the repentance; one who has atoned for his sins will not be debarred from salvation and one who thanks Allah for the Blessings and Bounties will not be denied the increase in them.
The truth of these facts is attested by the Holy Qur'an As far as prayers are concerned He says Pray to Me and I shall accept your prayers. About repentance He says: Whoever has done a bad deed or has indulged in sin and then repents and asks for His forgiveness will find Allah most Forgiving and Merciful. About being thankful He says if you are thankful for what you are given, I shall increase My Bounties and Blessings. About atonement of sin He says Allah accepts the repentance of those who have ignorantly committed vice and then soon repent for it, Allah accepts such repentance's, He is Wise and Omniscient.

135. Daily prayers are the best medium through which one can Seek the nearness to Allah. Hajj is Jihad (Holy War) for every weak person. For everything that you own there is Zakat, and Zakat of your body is fasting. The Jihad of a woman is to afford pleasant company to her husband.

136. If you want to pray to Allah for better means of subsistence, then first give something in charity

137. When someone is sure of the returns, then he shows generosity.

138. Aid (from Allah) is in proportion to the trouble.

139. He who practices moderation and frugality will never be threatened with poverty.

140. One of the conveniences in life is to have less children.

141. Loving one another is half of wisdom.

142. Grief is half of old age.

143. Grant of patience (from Allah) is in proportion to the extent of calamity you are passing through. If you exhibit fretfulness, irritation, and despair in calamities, then your patience and your exertions are wasted.

144. Many persons get nothing out of their fasts but hunger and thirst, many more get nothing out of their night prayers but exertions and sleepless nights. Wise and sagacious persons are praiseworthy even if they do not fast and sleep during the nights.

145. Defend your faith (in Allah) with the help of charity. Protect your wealth with the aid of Zakat. Let the prayers guard you from calamities and disasters.

146. Kumayl bin Ziyad Nakha'i says that once Imam Ali put his hand in his hand and took me to the grave-yard. When he passed through it and left the city behind, he heaved a sigh and said "Kumayl, these hearts are containers of the secrets of knowledge and wisdom and the best container is the one which can hold the most and what it holds, it can preserve and protect in the best way. Therefore, remember carefully what I am telling you. Remember that there are three kinds of people: one kind is of those learned people who are highly versed in the ethics of truth and philosophy of religion, second is the kind of those who are acquiring the above knowledge and the third is that class of people who are uneducated. They follow every pretender and accept every slogan, they have neither acquired any knowledge nor have they secured any support of firm and rational convictions. Remember, Kumayl, knowledge is better than wealth because it protects you while you have to guard wealth. It decreases if you keep on spending it but the more you make use of knowledge the more it increases. What you get through wealth dis- appears as soon as wealth disappears but what you achieve through knowledge will remain even after you.

O Kumayl ! Knowledge is power and it can command obedience. A man of knowledge during his lifetime can make people obey and follow him and he is praised and venerated after his death. Remember that knowledge is a ruler and wealth is its subject.

O Kumayl ! Those who amass wealth, though alive, are dead to realities of life, and those who achieve knowledge, will remain alive through their knowledge and wisdom even after their death, though their faces may disappear from the community of living beings, yet their ideas, the knowledge which they had left behind and their memory, will remain in the minds of people".

Kumayl says that after this brief dissertation, Imam Ali pointed towards his chest and said, "Look Kumayl! Here I hold stores and treasures of knowledge. I wish I could find somebody to share it with me. Yes, I found a few, but one of them, though quite intelligent, was untrustworthy, he would sell his salvation to get hold of the world and its pleasures, he would make religion a pretence to grasp worldly power and wealth, he would make this Blessing of Allah (knowledge) serve him to get supremacy and control over friends of Allah and he would through knowledge exploit and suppress other human beings. The other person was such that he apparently obeyed truth and knowledge, yet his mind had not achieved the true light of religion, at the slightest ambiguity or doubt he would get suspicious of truth, mistrust religion and would rush towards skepticism. So neither of them was capable of acquiring the superior knowledge that I can impart. Besides these two I find some other person One of them is a slave of self and greedy for inordinate desires, which can easily drag him away from the path of religion, the other is an avaricious, grasping and acquisitive miser who will risk his life to grasp and hold wealth, none of these two will be of any use to religion or man, both of them resemble beasts having appetite for food. If sensible trustees of knowledge and wisdom totally disappear from human society then both knowledge and wisdom will suffer severely, may bring harm to humanity and may even die out. But this earth will never be without those persons who will prove the universality of truth as disclosed by Allah, they may be well-known persons, openly and fearlessly declaring the things revealed to them or they may, under fear of harm, injury or deaths hide themselves from the public gaze and may carry on their mission privately so that the reasons proving the reality of truth as preached by religion and as demonstrated by His Prophet may not totally disappear. How many are they and where could they be found? I swear by Allah that they are very few in number but their worth and their ranks before Allah are very high. Through them Allah preserves His Guidance so that they, while departing, may hand over these truths to persons like themselves. The knowledge which they have acquired has made them see the realities and visualize the truth and has instilled into them the spirit of faith and trust. The duties which were decreed as hard and unbearable by them. They feel happy in the company and association of things which frighten the ignorant and uneducated. They live in this world like everybody else but their souls soar to the heights of Divine Eminence. They are media of Allah on this earth and they invite people towards Him. How I love to meet them O Kumayl ! I have told you all that I have to say, you can go back to your place whenever you like".

147. A man can be valued through his sayings.

148. One who does not realize his own value is condemned to utter failure. (Every kind of complex, superiority or inferiority is harmful to man).

149. Somebody requested Imam Ali to advise him how to lead a useful and sober life. Imam Ali thereupon advised him thus: "Do not be among those people who want to gain good returns without working hard for them, who have long hopes and keep on postponing repentance and penance, who talk like pious persons but run after vicious pleasures. Do not be among those who are not satisfied if they get more in life and are not content if their lot in life's pleasures is less (they are never satisfied), who never thank Allah for what they get and keep on constantly demanding increase in what is left with them; who advise others to such good deeds that they themselves refrain from; who appreciate good people but do not follow their ways of life; who hate bad and vicious people but follow their ways of life; who, on account of their excessive sins hate death but do not give up the sinful ways of life; who, if fallen ill, repent their ways of life and on regaining their health fearlessly readopt the same frivolous ways; who get despondent and lose all hopes, but on gaining health, become arrogant and careless; who, if faced with misfor- tunes, dangers or afflictions, turn to Allah and keep on beseeching Him for relief and when relieved or favoured with comfort and ease they are deceived by the comfortable conditions they found themselves in and forget Allah and forsake prayers; whose minds are allured by day dreams and forlorn hopes and who abhor to face realities of life; who fear for others the enormous repercussions of vices and sins but for their own deeds expect very high rewards or very light disciplinary actions. Riches make such people arrogant, rebellious and wicked, and poverty makes them despondent and lethargic. If they have to work, they work lazily and if they put up a demand they do it stubbornly.

Under the influence of inordinate cravings, they commit sins in quick succession and keep on postponing repentance. Calamities and adversities make them give up the distinguished characteristics of Muslims (patience, hope in future and work for improvement of circumstances). They advise people with narration's of events and facts but do not take any lesson from them. They are good at preachings but bad at practice, therefore they always talk of lofty deeds but their actions belie their words. They are keen to acquire temporal pleasures but are careless and slow to achieve permanent (Divine) benefits. They think good for themselves the things which are actually injurious to them and regard harmful the things which really benefit them. They are afraid of death but waste their time and do not resort to good deeds before death overtakes them. The vices which they regard as enormous sins for others, they consider as minor shortcomings for themselves. Similarly, they attach great importance to their obedience to the orders of Allah and belittle similar actions in others. Therefore, they often criticize others and speak very highly of their own deeds. They are happy to spend their time in society of rich persons, wasting it in luxuries and vices but are averse to employing for useful purposes in company of the poor and pious people: They are quick and free to pass verdicts against others but they never pass a verdict against their own vicious deeds. They force others to obey them but they never obey Allah. They collect their dues carefully but never pay the dues they owe. They are not afraid of Allah but fear powerful men".

150. Everyone has an end, it may be pleasant or sorrowful.

151. Everyone, who is born, has to die and once dead he is as good as having not come into existence.

152. One, who adopts patience, will never be deprived of success though it may take a long time to reach him.

153. One who assents or subsribes to the actions of a group or a party is as good as having committed the deed himself. A man who joins a sinful deed makes himself responsible for two-fold punishments, one for doing the deed and the other for assenting and subscribing to it.

154. Accept promises of only those persons who can stead- fastly-adhere to their pledges.

155. You are ordained to recognize the Imams (the right successors of the Holy Prophet) and to obey them.

156. You have been shown, if you only care to see; you have been advised if you care to take advantage of advice; you have been told if you care to listen to good counsels.

157. Admonish your brother (comrade) by good deeds and kind regards, and ward off his evil by favouring him.

158. One, who enters the places of evil repute has no right to complain against a man who speaks ill of him.

159. One, who acquires power cannot avoid favouritism.

160. One, who is willful and conceited will suffer losses and calamities and one who seeks advice can secure advan- tages of many counsels.

161. One, who guards his secrets has complete control over his affairs.

162. Poverty is the worst form of death.

163. One, who serves a person from whom he gets no reci- procal performance of duties, in fact, worships him.

164. One should not obey anyone against the commands of Allah.

165. Do not blame a man who delays in securing what are his just rights but blame lies on him who grasps the rights which do not belong to him.

166. Conceit is a barrier to progress and improvement.

167. Death is near and our mutual company is short.

168. There is enough light for one who wants to see.

169. It is wiser to abstain then to repent.

170. Often inordinate desire to secure a single gain acts as a hindrance for the quest of many profitable pursuits.

171. People often hate those things which they do not know or cannot understand.

172. One, who seeks advice learns to realize his mistakes.

173. One who struggles for the cause of Allah secures victory over His enemies.

174. When you feel afraid or nervous to do a thing then do it because the real harm which you may thus receive is less poignant than its expectation and fear.

175. Your supremacy over others is in proportion to the extent of your knowledge and wisdom.

176. The best way to punish an evil-doer is to reward handsomely a good person for his good deeds.

177. If you want to remove evil from the minds of others then first give up evil intentions yourself.

178. Obstinacy will prevent you from a correct decision.

179. Greed is permanent slavery.

180. Deficiency will result in shame and sorrow but caution and foresight will bring peace and security.

181. To keep silent when you can say something wise and useful is as bad as keeping on propagating foolish and unwise thoughts.

182. If two opposite theories are propagated one will be wrong.

183. When truth was revealed to me I never doubted it.

184. I never lied and the things revealed to me were not false I never misled anybody nor was I misled.

185. One, who starts tyranny, will repent soon.

186. Death is never very far.

187. One who forsakes truth earns eternal damnation.

188. One who cannot benefit by patience will die in grief.

189. In this world, man is a target of death, an easy prey to calamities, here every morsel and every draught is liable to choke one, here one never receives a favour until he loses another instead, here every additional day in one's life is a day reduced from the total span of his existence, when death is the natural outcome of life, how can we expect immortality?

190. O son of Adam, if you have collected anything in excess of your actual need, you will act only as its trustee for someone else to use it.

191. Hearts have the tendency of likes and dislikes and are liable to be energetic and lethargic, therefore, make them work when they are energetic because if hearts are forced (to do a thing) they will be blinded.

192. When I feel angry with a person how and when should I satisfy my anger, whether at a time when I am not in a position to retaliate and people may advise me to bear patiently or when I have power to punish and I forgive.

193. Minds get tired like bodies. When you feel that your; mind is tired, then invigorate it with sober advice.

194. If you find that somebody is not grateful for all that you have done for him, then do not get disappointed because often you will find that someone else feels under your obligation though you have done nothing for him and thus your good deeds will be compensated, and Allah will reward you for your goodness.

195. The first fruit of forbearance is that people will sympathize with you and they will go against the man who offended you arrogantly.

196. One who takes account of his shortcomings will always gain by it; one who is unmindful of them will always suffer. One who is afraid of the Day of Judgment, is safe from the Wrath of Allah. One who takes lessons from the events of life, gets vision, one who acquires vision becomes wise and one who attains wisdom achieves knowledge.

197. Bear sorrows and calamities patiently, otherwise you will never be happy.

198. One who comes into power often oppresses.

199. Adversities often bring good qualities to the front.

200. If a friend envies you, then he is not a true friend.

201. Avarice dulls the faculties of judgment and wisdom.

202. Oppression and tyranny are the worse companions for the Hereafter.

203. The best deed of a great man is to forgive and forget.

204. Silence will create respect and dignity; justice and fairplay will bring more friends; benevolence and charity will enhance prestige and position; courtesy will draw benevolence; service of mankind will secure leadership and good words will overcome powerful enemies.

205. A greedy man will always find himself in the shackles of humility.

206. There are people who worship Allah to gain His Favors, this is the worship of traders; while there are some who worship Him to keep themselves free from His Wrath, this is the worship of slaves; a few who obey Him out of their sense of gratitude and obligations, this is the worship of free and noble men.